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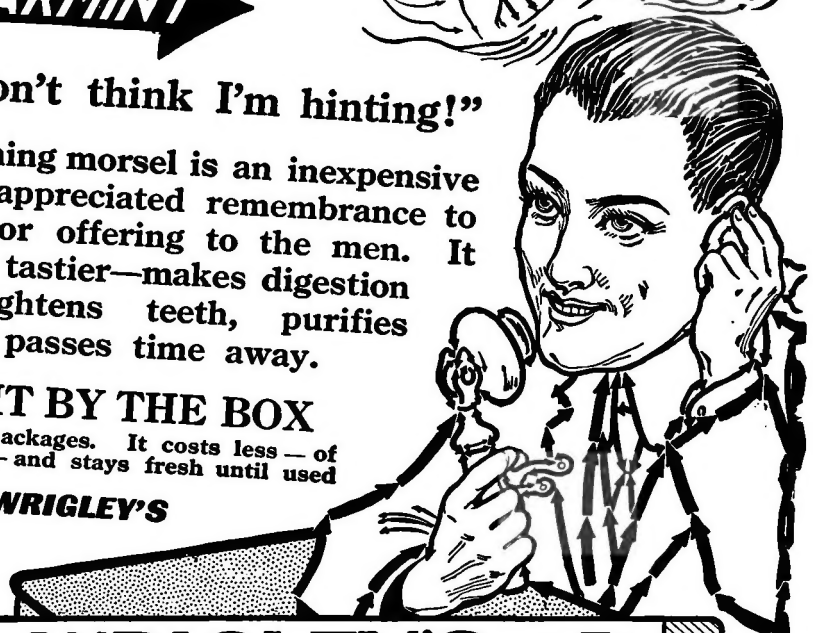

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Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents
Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.
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Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
Erman J. Ridgway, President Ray Brown, Secretary and Treasurer
Spring & Macdougal Streets, New York City
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February
1914
Vol. VII
No. IV

The Abduction Club

An Adventure With Craig Kennedy—Scientific Detective

By Arthur B. Reeve

CHAPTER I

THE VANISHER

"HELLO, Jameson, is Kennedy in?" I glanced up from the evening papers to encounter the square-jawed, alert face of District Attorney Carton in the doorway of our apartment.

"How do you do, Judge?" I exclaimed. "No, but I expect him any second now. Won't you sit down?"

The District Attorney dropped, rather wearily I thought, into a chair and looked at his watch.

I had made Carton's acquaintance some years before as a cub reporter on the *Star* while he was a judge of an inferior court. Our acquaintance had grown through several political campaigns in which I had had assignments that brought me into contact with him, and more recently some special writing which I had taken up had led me across his trail again in telling the story of his clean-up of graft in the city.

"I expect a Mrs. Royce here in a few minutes," he remarked, glancing again at his watch. His eye caught the headline of the news story I had been reading and he added quickly, "What do the boys on the *Star* think of that Royce case, anyhow?"

It was, I may say, a case deeply shrouded in mystery—the disappearance without warning of a beautiful young girl, Phyllis Royce, barely eighteen. Her family, the police, and now the District Attorney had sought to solve it in vain. Some had thought it a kidnaping, others a suicide and others had hinted at murder. All sorts of theories had been advanced without in the least changing the original dominant note of mystery.

Photographs of the young woman had been published broadcast, I knew, without eliciting a word in reply. Young men whom she had known and girls with whom she had been intimate had been questioned without

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so much as a clue being obtained. Reports that she had been seen had come in from all over the country, as they always do in such cases. All had been investigated and had turned out to be based on nothing more than imagination. The mystery remained unsolved.

"Well," I began, "of course there's a lot of talk now in the papers about aphasia and amnesia and all that stuff. But, you know, we reporters are a skeptical lot. We have to be shown. I can't say we put much faith in *that*."

"But what is the explanation? You fellows always have an opinion."

"I can't say that we have in this case—yet," I returned frankly. "When a girl just simply disappears on Fifth Avenue and there isn't even the shadow of a clue as to where she went or how, well—— Oh, there's Kennedy, now. Put it up to him."

"We were just talking of that Phyllis Royce disappearance case," resumed Carton, when the greetings were over. "What do you think of it?"

"Think of it?" repeated Kennedy promptly, with a frank glance at the District Attorney. "Why, Judge, I think of it the same as you do. If you didn't think it was a case that was in some way connected with your vice and graft investigation, you wouldn't be here. And if I didn't think it promised surprising results, aside from the interest I have naturally in solving such mysteries, I wouldn't be ready to take up the offer which you came here to make."

"You're a wizard, Kennedy," laughed the District Attorney, though it was easily seen that he was both pleased and relieved to think that he had enlisted Craig's services so easily.

"Not much of a wizard. In the first place I know that you wouldn't go to the police in the present state of armed truce between your Office and Headquarters. You want some one outside. Well, I'm more than willing to be that person. The whole thing, in its larger aspects, interests me. Phyllis Royce in particular arouses my sympathies. That's all."

"Exactly, Kennedy. This fight I'm in is going to be the fight of my life. Just now people are looking to me to find Phyllis Royce. Her mother was in to see me to-day; there isn't much that she could add to what has already been said. Phyllis was a deucedly attractive girl. The family is an excellent one, but in reduced circumstances. She had been used to a great deal as a child, but now, since the death of her father, she had to go to work—and you know what that means to a girl like that."

CARTON had laid down a new photograph which the newspapers had not printed yet. Phyllis Royce was slender, *petite*, *chic*. Her dark hair was carefully groomed, and there was an air with which she wore her clothes and carried herself even in a portrait which showed she was no ordinary girl. Her soft brown eyes had that magnetic look which is dangerous to their owner if she does not know how to curb it. Even the lens had caught the soft richness of the skin of her oval face and full throat and neck. Indeed, she was precisely the girl to grace a fortune, and only a turn of the hand of that fickle goddess had prevented her from doing so.

I had picked up one of the evening papers and was looking at the newspaper half tone which more than failed to do justice to her. Just then my eye happened on an item which Carton and I had been about to discuss when Kennedy entered.

"As a scientist, does the amnesia theory appeal to you; Craig?" I asked. "Now, here is an explanation by one of the special writers, headed 'Personalities Lost through Amnesia.' Listen."

The article was brief:

Mysterious disappearances such as that of Phyllis Royce have alarmed the public and baffled the police before this—disappearances that have in their suddenness, apparent lack of purpose and inexplicability much in common with the case of Miss Royce.

Leaving out of account the class of disappearances for their own convenience—embezzlers, blackmailers, and so forth—there is still a large number of recorded cases where the subjects have dropped out of sight without apparent cause or reason, and have left behind them untarnished reputations and solvent bank accounts. Of these, a small percentage are found to have met with violence; others have been victims of a suicidal mania, and sooner or later a clue has come to light which has established the fact. The dead are often easier to find than are the living.

Of the remaining small proportion, there are on record, however, a number of carefully authenticated cases where the subject has been the victim of a sudden and complete loss of memory.

This dislocation of memory is a variety of aphasia known as amnesia, and when the memory is recurrently lost and restored, as alternating personality. The Society for Psychical Research and many eminent psychologists, among them the late William James, Dr. Weir Mitchell, Dr. Hodgson of

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Boston, and Dr. A. E. Osborn of San Francisco, have reported many cases of alternating personality.

Studious efforts are being made to understand and to explain the strange type of mental phenomena exhibited in these cases, but as yet no one has given a clear and comprehensive explanation of them. Such cases are by no means always connected with disappearances, and exhaustive studies have been made of types of alternating personality that have from first to last been carefully watched by scientists of the first rank.

The variety known as the ambulatory type, where the patient suddenly loses all knowledge of his own identity and of his past and takes himself off, leaving no trace or clue, is the variety which the present case calls to popular interest.

There followed a number of most interesting cases, and an elaborate argument by the writer to show that Phyllis Royce was a victim of this psychological aberration; that she was, in other words, "a vanisher."

I laid down the paper with a questioning look at Craig Kennedy.

"As a scientist," he replied deliberately, "the theory, of course, does appeal to me, especially in the ingenious way in which that writer applied it. However, as a detective—" he shook his head slowly—"and in relation to the Royce case as far as we have gone now—well, it leaves much to be explained."

Just then the door buzzer rang and Carton himself sprang to answer it.

"That's Mrs. Royce now—her mother. I told her I was going to put the case to you, Kennedy, and took the liberty of asking her to come up here to meet you. Good evening, Mrs. Royce. Let me introduce Professor Kennedy and Mr. Jameson, of whom I spoke to you."

She bowed and murmured a tremulous good evening. Kennedy placed a chair for her and she thanked him.

Mrs. Royce was a slender little woman in black, well past middle age, whose face and dress spoke of years of economy, even of privation, but whose manner was plainly that of a woman of gentle breeding and former luxury. She was precisely of the type of decayed gentlewoman that one meets often in the city, especially at some of the middle class boarding-houses.

Deeply as the disappearance of her only daughter had affected her, Mrs. Royce was facing it bravely. That was her nature. One could imagine that only when Phyllis was actually found would this plucky little woman collapse. Instinctively one felt that she claimed his assistance in the unequal fight she was waging against the complexities of modern life for which she had been so ill prepared.

"I do hope you will be able to find my daughter," she began, controlling her voice with an effort. "Mr. Carton has been so kind, more than kind, I am sure, in getting your aid. The police seem to be able to do nothing. They make out reports, put me off, tell me they are making progress—but they know nothing of Phyllis."

There was a tragic pathos in the words.

"It is a fact, then," he asked, "that after Miss Royce left her office on lower Fifth Avenue and walked up several blocks, there is not a clue to what happened to her?"

He said it with a keen look at the face of Mrs. Royce. I recalled one case where a girl had disappeared in which Kennedy had always asserted that if the family had been perfectly frank at the start much more might have been accomplished in unraveling the mystery.

There was evident sincerity in Mrs. Royce as she replied quickly: "Absolutely. Another girl from the office walked several blocks up the Avenue with her, then left her to take the subway. We live downtown and it could not have taken Phyllis five minutes to get home after that, through a crowded street, too."

"Of course she may have met a friend, may have stopped somewhere," put in Kennedy, as if trying out the remark.

"Where could she stop?" asked Mrs. Royce, looking at him with those same eyes which we had seen in the picture. "I hope you don't think that Phyllis——"

The little widow was on the verge of tears at the mere hint that her daughter might have had friends that were not all, perhaps, that they should be.

CARTON came to the rescue. "Miss Royce," he put in, "was a very attractive girl, very. She had hosts of admirers, as every attractive girl must have. Most of them, all of them as far as Mrs. Royce knows and I have been able to find out, were young men at the office where she worked or friends of that sort—not the ordinary clerk, but of the rising, younger self-made generation. Still, they don't seem to have interested her particularly as far as I have been able to discover. She merely liked them. There was absolutely nothing known to point to the

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fact that she was any different from thousands of girls in that respect. She was vivacious, full of fun and life, a girl any fellow would have been more than proud to take to a dance. She was ambitious, I suppose, but nothing more."

"Phyllis was not a bad girl," asserted Mrs. Royce vehemently. "She was a good girl. I don't believe there was much, in fact anything important, in which she did not make me her confidante. Yes, she was ambitious. So am I. Phyllis was to bring our family back to the station where it was before the panic wiped out our fortune and killed my husband. That is all."

"Yes," interjected Carton again. "Nothing at all is known that would make one think that she was what girls call 'a sport.' "

Kennedy looked up but said nothing. I thought I could read the unspoken word on his lips as he glanced from Carton to Mrs. Royce: "Known."

Mrs. Royce had risen and was facing us.

"Is there no one in all this great city," appealed the distracted little woman with outstretched arms, "who can find my daughter? Is it possible that a girl can disappear in broad daylight in the streets and never be heard of again? Oh, won't you find her? Tell me she is safe—that she is still the little girl I——"

Her voice failed and she was crying softly into her lace handkerchief. It was touching and I saw that Kennedy was deeply moved, although at once to his practical mind the thought must have occurred that nothing was to be gained by further questions.

"Believe me, Mrs. Royce," he said, taking her hand, "I will do all that is in my power to find her."

"Thank you," she murmured.

A moment later she had recovered her composure, and had risen to go. There was a flattering look of relief on her face which in itself must have been an ample reward to Kennedy, a retainer worth more to him in a case like this than money.

"I shall be in my office early in the morning," remarked Carton aside. "I'd like to see you. There may be some new clues."

Carton went out with Mrs. Royce. Busy as he was, he had time to turn aside to help this bereaved woman, and I admired him for it.

"Do you think it is one of those cases, like some that Carton has uncovered on the East Side and among immigrant girls?" I asked when the door had shut.

"Can't say," remarked Kennedy in a brown study.

"It's awful if it is," I pursued. "And if it is I suppose all that will result from it will be a momentary thrill of the newspaper readers and then people will fall back on the old saying that after all it is only a result of human nature that such things happen—they always have happened and they always will."

"That sort of a thing is *not* a result of human nature," returned Kennedy hotly. "I mean to say that if it should turn out to be connected with the vice investigations of Carton and not a case of aphasia, such a disappearance you would find to be due to the persistent, cunning and unprincipled exploitation of young girls.

"No, Walter, it is not that women are weak or that men are vicious, primarily. That doesn't account for a case like this. Then, too, some people to-day are fond of putting the whole evil on low wages as a cause. It isn't that alone. It isn't even lack of education or of moral training. Human nature is not so bad in the mass as to cause such things. No, don't you see it, as a reporter? It is big business, in its way, that Carton is fighting—big business in the commercialized ruin of girls—such, perhaps, as Phyllis Royce. I'm glad to have a chance to do what I can to smash it.

"Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do to-night, just so that we can start this thing with a clear understanding of what it amounts to. I want you to spend the evening in looking up just what this situation is. I know there is an army of 'vanishers' in New York. I want to know something about them in the mass. Can't you dig up something down in the files of the *Star?*"

KENNEDY had some matters concerning other cases to clear up before he felt free to devote his whole time to this. As there was nothing we could do immediately, I spent some time getting at the facts he wanted. Indeed it did not take me long to discover that the disappearance of Phyllis Royce, in spite of the prominence it had been given, was by no means an isolated case. I found that the *Star* alone had chronicled scores of such disappearances during the past few months, cases of girls who had simply been swallowed up in the

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big city. They were the daughters of neither the rich nor of the poor, but rather in ordinary circumstances, most of them.

Even the police records showed upward of a thousand missing young girls, ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-one years, and I knew that the police lists scarcely approximated the total number of missing persons in the great city, especially in those cases where a hesitancy on the part of parents and relatives often concealed the loss. I came away with the impression that there were literally hundreds of cases every bit as baffling as that of Phyllis Royce, of young girls who had left absolutely no trace behind, who had made no preparations for departure and of whom few had been heard from since they disappeared. Many from homes of refinement and even of high financial standing had disappeared, leaving no clues behind.

Many reasons had been assigned for the disappearances. I knew that there must be many causes at work, that no one cause could be responsible for all or even a majority of the cases. There were suicides and murders and elopements, family troubles, poverty, desire for freedom and adventure; innumerable causes, perhaps even kidnaping.

The question was, however, which of these causes had been in operation in the case of Phyllis Royce? Where had she gone? Where had this whole army of vanishers disappeared? Were these disappearances merely accidents or was there an epidemic of amnesia? I could bring myself to neither of the latter two conclusions, but was forced to answer my own question, in lieu of an answer from Kennedy, by propounding a third—"Was there a sort of organized abduction club?" And after I had reasoned it all out, I still found myself back at the original question, Where did Phyllis Royce go—where did they all go?

CHAPTER II

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER

"WHAT do you make of that, Kennedy?" asked the District Attorney the following morning when we had met him very early at his office downtown.

He unfolded a letter which had come in the first mail, over which he had been puzzling for some minutes. It was written, or rather typewritten, on plain paper. The envelope was plain and bore no marks of identification, except possibly that it had been mailed uptown.

The letter ran:

DEAR SIR:

Although this is an anonymous letter, I beg that you will not consider it such, since it will be plain to you that there is good reason for my wishing to remain nameless.

I want to tell you of some things that have taken place recently at a little hotel in the West Fifties. No doubt you know of the place already—the Little Montmartre.

There are several young and wealthy men who frequent this resort. I do not dare tell you their names, but one is a well known clubman and man about town, another is a banker and broker, also well known, and a third is a lawyer. I might also mention an intimate friend of theirs, though not of their position in society—a doctor who has somewhat of a reputation among the class of people who frequent the Little Montmartre, ready to furnish them with anything from a medical certificate to drugs and treatment.

I have read a great deal in the newspapers lately of the disappearance of Phyllis Royce, and her case interests me. I think you will find that it will repay you to look into the hint I have given. I don't think it is necessary to say any more. Indeed it may be dangerous to me, and I beg that you will not even show this letter to any one except those associated with you, and then, please, only with the understanding that it is to go no farther.

Phyllis Royce is not at this hotel, but I am sure that some of those whose wild orgies have scandalized even the Little Montmartre know something about her.

Yours truly,
AN OUTCAST.

Kennedy looked up quickly at Carton as he finished reading the letter.

"Typical," he remarked. "Anonymous letters occasionally are of a friendly nature, but usually they reflect with more or less severity upon the conduct or character of some one. They usually receive little attention, but sometimes they are of the most serious character. In many instances they are most important links in chains of evidence pointing to grave crimes.

"It is possible to draw certain conclusions from such letters at once. For instance, it is a surprising fact that in a large number of cases the anonymous letter writer is a woman, who may write what it does not seem possible she could write. Such letters often by their writing, materials used, composition and general form indicate at once the sex of the writer and frequently show nationality, age, education, and occupation. These facts may often point to the probable author.

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"Now in this case, the writer evidently was well educated. Assumed illiteracy is a frequent disguise, but it is impossible for an author to assume a literacy he or she does not possess. Then, too, women are more apt to assume the characteristics of men than men of women. There are many things to be considered. Too bad it wasn't in ordinary handwriting. That would have shown much more. However, we shall try our best with what we have here. What impressed you about it?"

"Well," remarked Carton, "the thing that impressed me was that as usual and as I fully expected, the trail leads right back to protected vice and commercialized graft. This Little Montmartre is one of the swellest of such resorts in the city, the legitimate successor to the scores and hundreds of places which the authorities and the vice investigators have closed recently. In fact, Kennedy, I consider it more dangerous, because it is run, on the surface at least, just like any of the first-class hotels. There's no violation of law there, at least not openly."

Craig had continued to examine the letter closely. "So, you have already investigated the Little Montmartre?" he queried, drawing from his pocket a little strip of glass and laying it down over the letter.

"Indeed I have," returned the District Attorney, watching Kennedy curiously. "It is a place with a very unsavory reputation. And yet I have been able to get nothing on it. They are so confounded clever. There is never any outward violation of law; they adhere strictly to the letter of the rule of outward decency."

OVER the typewritten characters Kennedy had placed the slip of glass and I could see that it was ruled into little squares or oblongs, into each of which one of the type of the typewritten sheet seemed to fall. Apparently he had forgotten the contents of the letter in his interest in the text itself. He held the paper up to the light and seemed to study its texture and thickness. Then he examined the typed characters more closely with a little pocket magnifying glass, his lips moving as if he were counting something. Finally he seized a mass of correspondence on Carton's desk and began comparing the letter with others, apparently to determine just the shade of writing of the ribbon. Finally he gave it up and leaned back in his chair regarding us.

"It is written in the regular pica type," he remarked thoughtfully, "and on a machine that has seen considerable rough usage, although it is not an old machine. It will take me a little time to identify the make, but after I have done that, I think I could identify the particular machine itself the moment I saw it. You see, it is only a clue that would serve to fix it once you found that machine. The point is, after all, to find it. But once found, I am sure we shall be close to the source of the letter. I may keep this and study it at my leisure?"

"Certainly."

"Now," resumed Kennedy, pacing the floor thoughtfully, "the next question is, How are we to proceed? The first step naturally will be the investigation of this Little Montmartre. How is it to be done? I presume you don't want to go up there and look it over yourself, Carton?"

"Most certainly not," said Carton emphatically. "Not if you want this case to go any further. Why, I can't walk around a corner now without a general scurry for the cyclone cellars. They all know me, and those who don't are watching for me. On the contrary, if you are going to start there I had better execute a flank movement in Queens or Jersey to divert attention. Really, I mean it. I had better keep in the background. But I'll tell you what I would like to do."

Carton hesitated and came to a full stop.

"What's the matter?" asked Kennedy, quickly noticing the hesitation.

"Why—I—er—didn't know just how you'd take a suggestion—that's all."

"Thankfully. What is it?"

"You know young Haxworth?"

"You mean the son of the millionaire who is investigating vice and whom the newspapers are poking fun at?"

"Yes. Those papers make me tired. He has been working, you know, with me in this matter. He is really serious about it, too. He has a corps of investigators of his own already. Well, there is one of them, a woman detective named Clare Kendall, who is the brains of the whole Haxworth outfit. If you would be willing to have them—er—to have her coöperate with you, I think I could persuade Haxworth——"

"Oh," broke in Kennedy with a laugh. "I see. You think perhaps there might be some professional jealousy? On the contrary, it solves a problem I was already

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considering. Of course we shall need a woman in this case, one with a rare amount of discretion and ability. Yes, by all means let us call in Miss Kendall, and let us take every advantage we can of what Haxworth has already accomplished."

Carton seized the telephone.

"Tell her to meet us at my laboratory in half an hour," interposed Kennedy. "You will come along?"

"I can't. Court opens in twenty minutes and there is a motion I must argue myself."

Half an hour later, a tall, striking, self-reliant young woman with an engaging smile opened the laboratory door and inquired for Professor Kennedy.

"Miss Kendall?" Craig inquired coming forward to meet her.

She was dark-haired, with regular features and an expression which showed a high degree of intelligence. Her clear gray eyes seemed to penetrate and tear the mask off you. It was not only her features and eyes that showed intelligence, but her gown showed that without sacrificing neatness she had deliberately toned down the existing fashions which so admirably fitted in with her figure in order that she might not appear noticeable. It was clever, for if there is anything a good detective must do it is to prevent people from looking twice.

I knew something of her history already. She had begun on a rather difficult case for one of the large agencies and after a few years of experience had decided that there was a field for an independent woman detective who would appeal particularly to women themselves. Unaided she had fought her way to a position of keen rivalry now with the best men in the profession.

Narrowly I watched Kennedy. Here, I felt instinctively, were the "new" woman and the "new" man, if there are such things. I wondered just how they would hit it off together. For the moment, at least, Clare Kendall was an absorbing study, as she greeted us with a frank, jerky straight-arm handshake.

"Mr. Carton," she said directly, "has told me that he received an anonymous letter this morning. May I see it?"

THERE are times when the so-called "new" woman's assumed masculine bruskness is a trifle jarring, as well as often missing the point But with Clare Kendall one did not feel that she was eternally trying to assert that she was the equal or the superior of some one else, although she was, as far as the majority of detectives I have met are concerned. It was rather that she was different; in fact, almost from the start I felt that she was indispensable. She seemed to have that ability to go straight to the point at issue, a sort of faculty of intuition which is often more valuable than anything else, the ability to feel or sense things for which at first there was no actual proof. No good detective ever lacks that sort of instinct and Clare Kendall, being a woman, had it in large degree. But she had more. She had the ability to go further and get the facts and actual proof; for, as she often said during the course of the case, "Woman's intuition may not be good evidence in a court of law, but it is one of the best means to get good evidence that will convince a court of law."

"My investigators have been watching that place for some time," she remarked as she finished the letter. "Of course, having been closely in touch with this sort of thing for several months in my work for Mr. Haxworth, I have had all the opportunity in the world to observe and collect information. The letter does not surprise me."

"Then you think it is a good tip?" asked Kennedy.

"Decidedly, although without the letter I should not have started there, I think. Still, as nearly as I can gather, there is a rather nondescript crowd connected in one way or another with the Montmartre. For instance, there is a pretty tough character who seems to be connected with the people there, my investigators tell me. It is a fellow named 'Ike the Dropper,' one of those strong-arm men who have migrated up from the East Side to the White Light District. At least my investigators have told me they have seen him there, for I have never bothered with the place myself. There has been plenty of work elsewhere which promised immediate results. I'm glad to have a chance to tackle this place, though, with your help."

"What do you think of the rest of the letter?" asked Craig.

"I think I could make a pretty shrewd guess from what I have heard, as to the identity of some of those hinted at. I'm not sure, but I think the lawyer may be a Mr. Levine, a clever enough attorney who has a

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large theatrical clientele and none too savory a reputation as a local politician. The banker may be Mr. Bayard, although he is not exactly a young man. Still, I know he has been associated with the place. As for the clubman I should guess that that was Colin Clarke."

"Colin Clarke?" I echoed. "What! That's the fellow whose engagement to the heiress Dorothy Padgett was announced the other day, isn't it?"

"The same."

Dorothy Padgett was one of those fortunate young ladies, or perhaps unfortunate, according to one's point of view, who seemed to find it impossible to keep out of the newspapers. It was not so much through anything that she did as it was the fact that she had both an interesting personality with a certain dash and fascination about her and was the sole heiress to the Padgett millions since the death of her father over a year before. Naturally, one of the richest young women in the country had to submit to a virtual newspaper guardianship, and any one at all acquainted with the front pages knew of her varied interests from society to athletics, untrammeled by any of the serious activities of life which seem to have become a fad with some young persons who mistake sensation for seriousness. Still, on the whole, I think the impression Miss Dorothy had made on the public was rather favorable—that of a vivacious young girl, full of the joy of life.

"As a first step," said Kennedy, at length, "I am going to write a letter to Phyllis Royce, care of the Little Montmartre—or perhaps you had better do the actual writing of it, Miss Kendall. A woman's hand will look less suspicious."

"What shall I write?" she asked.

"Just a few lines. Tell her that you are one of the girls in the office, that you have heard she was at the Montmartre—anything. The actual writing doesn't make any difference. I merely want to see what happens."

Miss Kendall quickly wrote a little note and handed it to him.

"Then direct this envelope," he said, reaching into a drawer of his desk and bringing out a plain white one. "And let me seal it."

Carefully he sealed and stamped the letter and handed it to me to post.

"You will dine with us, Miss Kendall?" he asked as she rose to go. "Then we will plan the next step in our campaign."

"I shall be glad to do so," she replied. "Meanwhile I shall go over the ground again with our investigators who have been in the Montmartre. There may be something they can add."

Fifteen minutes later I had dropped the letter in the drop of a branch of the general post-office to insure its more prompt delivery, and it was on its way through the mails to accomplish the purpose Kennedy may have contemplated.

CHAPTER III

TERRORISM

I HAD scarcely turned from the door of the post-office when I was run into full tilt by a newsboy who was displaying a paper unfolded, and shouting his young lungs out as lustily as if the President had been assassinated.

A glance at the black headline of the paper caused me to change a hastily improvised word of admonition to, "Here, boy, a couple of those papers."

I had seen the name Bayard in the headline and it recalled the banker whom Miss Kendall had suggested not half an hour before as being possibly connected with the Little Montmartre and the disappearance of Phyllis Royce.

Across the top of the paper were the words: "Banker Bayard Dies Suddenly at Desk."

Quickly I ran my eye down the scanty column of news as I hurried back to the laboratory to Kennedy. The item read:

Bailey Bayard, the banker, of 20 Broad Street, was discovered dead at his desk by James Downes, the head clerk in his office, this morning shortly after the banking house opened for business.

So far only the barest details are available, although it is understood that the ambulance surgeon from the Hudson Hospital who was summoned immediately, Dr. W. J. Wise, and Dr. B. F. Haddon, Mr. Bayard's personal physician who arrived shortly afterward, coincided in the belief that the death was due to heart disease.

A few lines set off below the news item told briefly the biography of the deceased banker, adding:

Mr. Bayard, as is well known, carried many of the greatest secrets of society in his hat, as it were. For many years his father, whom he succeeded,

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managed several of the largest estates, and the son came into possession of the secrets to such an extent that he has sometimes been called "society's father confessor." It is said that many matters confided to him were of a delicate nature which, apart from considerations of ordinary professional honor imposing the necessity of absolute secrecy, impelled him to assert that he never kept a record of them or even a diary.

Kennedy read the paper with keen interest, scarcely waiting to finish before he had seized his hat.

"We must get down there immediately, Walter," he cried. "Of course there may be nothing in it as far as we are concerned, but there seems to be even in these meager details an evident effort to conceal something, and if that is the case the sooner we get on the spot the better."

IT WAS nearly noon before we entered the now closed offices of Bailey, Bayard & Co., just around the corner from Wall Street. A policeman had already been stationed at the door and a curious throng, mostly attracted by the newspaper publicity, had collected. Already the Coroner was there, accompanied by his physician, and it was through our acquaintance with them that we were admitted directly.

Downes, the chief clerk, was repeating the story of how he had found Mr. Bayard, his head thrown forward on the desk and his body huddled lifeless in the wide-armed office chair. Downes looked like an ideal head clerk to whom confidential affairs involving millions might be safely entrusted. He was a middle-aged man with a spare crop of hair, a nervous, alert manner and a habit of turning up and down the cuffs of his thin alpaca office coat, as if in doubt, now that business was interrupted, just which style to affect.

The body of the banker lay on a couch in his own office covered by a sheet which the ambulance surgeon had left, awaiting, in spite of the assertion of two physicians, the judgment of the Coroner.

Sudden death is always appalling, especially the sudden death of one on whom large affairs rested. But there was something peculiarly appalling about this death. Kennedy raised the sheet over the dead face. It disclosed a heavy-set man of somewhat more than average height. The face did not betray by its relaxed muscles any evidence of extreme suffering, but was rather stony and impassive. Indeed, stony was exactly the word. There was a transparent, whitened look about the dead banker which reminded one of marble or perhaps more of a death-mask.

"Most extraordinary," commented the Coroner to Kennedy. "Did you know him?"

Craig shook his head.

"I knew him slightly," went on the official. "He was a most active man, and I thought in the best of health. Indeed, I understand that only a few weeks ago he applied for an increase in the insurance he carried and it was granted readily. Really I can't understand how he could have developed a serious affection of the heart in so short a time. Downes tells me that it was only during the past few weeks that a change seems to have come over him, both in his looks and in his manner. I believe he was preparing to take a trip to one of the health resorts to take the waters in hope that it would benefit him. Of course he was always a hard worker, inclined to burn the candle at both ends, but—well—it seems strange that he should go off so suddenly. Dr. Haddon insists it was due to his generally run-down condition, and I think the Doctor is sincere. And yet——"

The Coroner shook his head. Kennedy said nothing, but I felt that even the cursory look at the pasty waxen face had given him an idea which he would not express until it had shaped itself into something like a certainty.

Carefully Kennedy had begun going over the room, beginning with Bayard's own desk at which he had been found. A low exclamation of surprise, not intended for the others, caused me to bend over Kennedy more closely. He had been looking over the littered top of the desk and then at the mass of waste in the huge scrap basket underneath. From the basket he had pulled a slender glass tube, empty.

"WHAT is it?" I asked in a whisper.

"I don't know yet," he replied. "There seems to be just a trace of something yellow in it. Perhaps it is only the glass after all. Still, it is a peculiar thing to find in the scrap basket."

"No one would have left it there who wanted to hide anything," I commented. Then suddenly the significance of it occurred to me. "Could he have—committed suicide?" I whispered hoarsely.

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Kennedy made no reply, but from his manner I gathered that it was at least within the range of possibility, though why one of the most prosperous and well known bankers should have done such a thing seemed positively inexplicable.

Kennedy had completed his survey of conditions in the room without discovering anything further, though I know he longed for an opportunity to delve into the private correspondence and papers of Bayard.

"I feel pretty much of an interloper here, Walter," he remarked as the others were in the outer office where the Coroner was making out the necessary orders permitting the removal of the body. "In fact, but for that slender remark of Miss Kendall's I should never have thought of connecting this with the Royce case, and perhaps I am mistaken, after all. But that little tube is strange."

A sudden idea seemed to flash across him. He rose quickly and uncovered the body again. Pulling up the sleeve of the coat and shirt he disclosed a number of punctures in the forearm.

A look of even greater astonishment crossed his face. He turned as if in doubt just what to do and his eye fell on the little black bag which the coroner's physician had left on a chair in the corner. It was the work of only a moment to take a little needle from it, squeeze a few drops of the uncoagulated blood out on a piece of sterile gauze and wrap it up carefully. Then with a pair of scissors he snipped off a few hairs from the back of the dead banker's head and wrapped them up carefully also.

"I suppose you are going to perform an autopsy?" remarked Kennedy to the Coroner as we joined the rest in the outside office.

"I think I shall," he replied.

"Then I can depend on you to let me have any results you may obtain? The case interests me extremely."

"Oh, certainly, Professor," agreed the Coroner.

"By the way, you're sure no one has had a chance to inject any embalming fluid since the death was discovered, and of course no one will until you give permission after you get the necessary parts for the examination."

"Quite sure," agreed the Coroner. "Why? Have you any ideas on the subject?"

"Oh, no," replied Craig non-committally. "Only I wanted to be sure. I'll keep in touch with you, if anything develops."

In the outside office we were still looking around, although there seemed to be very little hope of discovering anything evidential there, when I felt Kennedy plucking my sleeve. Turning I followed the direction of his eyes and saw a high shelf literally lined with japanned boxes such as are commonly used to hold papers and documents that need to be preserved.

Each box bore on its face a name, presumably of one of the clients or customers of the firm. Kennedy was looking at a whole row of them. They bore the words:

PADGETT ESTATE (TRUSTEES)

"Bayard must have managed the finances of the Padgett estate," he remarked in an undertone. "That, too, is interesting. I didn't know that, but it may be important. I believe it was more than instinct that brought us down here, Walter. The lines seem to be crossing one another, even if we have nothing but hearsay and rumor to aid us so far. I want to talk to Downes after the others get through quizzing."

Downes, who had been endeavoring to do a dozen things at once and had accomplished none of them, had at last managed to seclude himself in his own little glass cubby hole of an office and had flopped down in his chair to collect himself and decide what to do first toward meeting the tangled state of conditions into which the sudden death of the head of the firm had thrown things.

"I know you're very busy," began Kennedy apologetically, poking his head in the door, "but, Mr. Downes, what I am going to ask you is very important and I wanted to wait until all the others were through. I suppose Mr. Bayard had had a very busy morning?"

"Well," replied the clerk, mopping his forehead, "not especially so. In fact, as mornings usually run, I should say it was peculiarly dull. The middle of the month often brings such mornings. It is around the first that we are busiest."

"Anything to cause excitement?"

The clerk shook his head. "Nothing in particular. As far as I remember there was only one visitor to see Mr. Bayard, a woman."

"A woman?" repeated Kennedy.

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"Yes, a client." He seemed to hesitate over the word.

"Who?" asked Kennedy casually.

Downes looked blank. "It may sound to you as though I was trying to conceal something," he remarked at length, "but I am not, absolutely. The fact is that I do not know who she was."

"Then how do you know she was a client?" asked Craig.

"Only by inference. She had been in the office several times before and Mr. Bayard always saw her at once. She gave the name of 'Mrs. Johnson,' but as far as I know, and I know the records like a book, there is no client of that name; nor do I know any estate or interest with which she was connected."

"No," agreed Craig, "the name she gave does not necessarily mean anything. What did she look like?"

DOWNES paused as if trying to reproduce a mental picture of the mysterious visitor.

"Well, I should say she was of Spanish extraction," he began rather lamely. "Or at least of southern blood. Perhaps she was a Creole. If you asked me to describe a bond or a piece of property, I could, but a woman——Oh, she had darkish hair and eyes. Her skin was olive, I should say."

He was about to give it up as hopeless, but Kennedy persisted. "How about her nose?" he asked.

"It was straight, with just a little flare of the nostrils. That was what made me think she was of southern blood—I mean South American, you know."

"And her other features—her ears, her mouth; can you recall anything about them?"

"Oh, Lord, no," exclaimed Downes. "I'm not much of a ladies' man, and besides it wasn't her features I noticed. She was really a very attractive woman, I thought, but——"

"But what?"

"A little flashy in dress, a little too lavish, even for a woman of wealth. That is all."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, if you want me to describe her dress —I'm worse at that than on features. But I'd know her the moment I saw her again. And oh," he added, wallowing about hopelessly in the attempt to meet Craig's effort at getting a scientific description, "she had some of this new perfumery—a whole garden in bloom at once."

Downes was evidently hopeless. Still, Kennedy seemed to be not dissatisfied with what he had learned.

"This Bayard affair complicates matters considerably," he remarked as we walked over to the subway. "Of course our work is to find Phyllis Royce. But I shouldn't be surprised if we had first to clear up the—" he paused for the word, then finished—"the death of Bayard."

CHAPTER IV

THE QUACK DOCTOR

CLARE KENDALL met us at the laboratory, as we had arranged, for dinner. Kennedy had already begun preparations for an elaborate series of experiments, but laid them aside quickly.

"Just now it is more important for us to become acquainted with this Little Montmartre," he remarked. "I suppose, Miss Kendall, we may depend on you to join us?"

"Indeed you may," she replied energetically. "There is nothing that Mr. Haxworth would welcome more than evidence that would lead to the closing of that place."

Kennedy seemed to be impressed by the frankness and energy of the young woman.

"Perhaps if we three should go there, hire a private dining-room, and look about without making any move against the place that would excite suspicion, we might at least find out what it is that we are fighting. Of course we must dine somewhere, and up there at the same time we can plan our campaign."

"I think that would be ripping," she laughed, as the humor of the situation dawned on her. "Why, we shall be laying our plans right in the heart of the enemy's country and they will never realize it. Perhaps, too, we may get a glimpse of some of those people mentioned in the anonymous letter."

To Clare Kendall it was simply another phase of the game which she had been playing against the forces of evil in the city.

THE Little Montmartre was, as I already knew, one of the smaller hotels in a side street just off Broadway, eight or ten stories in height, of modern construction, and for all the world exactly

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like a score of other of the smaller hostelries of the famous city of hotels.

Clare, Craig and myself pulled up before the entrance in a taxicab, that seeming to be the accepted method of entering with éclat. A boy opened the door. I jumped out and settled with the driver without a demur at the usual overcharge, while Craig assisted Clare.

Laughing and chatting, we entered the bronze plate glass doors and walked slowly down a richly carpeted corridor. It was elegantly furnished and decorated with large palms set at intervals, quite the equal in luxuriousness, though on a smaller scale, of any of the larger and well known hotels. Beautifully marked marbles and expensive hangings greeted the eye at every turn. Faultlessly liveried servants solicitously waited about for tips.

Craig and Clare, who were slightly ahead of me, turned quickly into a little alcove, or reception room and Craig placed a chair for her. Farther down the corridor I could see the office, and beyond a large main dining-room from which strains of music came and now and then the buzz of conversation and laughter from gay parties at the immaculately white tables.

"Boy," called Kennedy, quietly, catching the eye of a passing bell hop and unostentatiously slipping a quarter into his hand, which closed over the coin almost automatically, "the head waiter, please. Oh—er—by the way—what is his name?"

"Julius," returned the boy, to whom the proceeding seemed to present nothing novel, although the whole atmosphere of the place was beyond his years. "I'll get him in a minute, sir. He's in the main dining-room. He's having some trouble with the cabaret singers. One of them is late—as usual."

We sat in the easy chairs watching the people passing and repassing in the corridor. There was no effort at concealment here. I wondered whether the death of Bayard had made any difference in the gay round of his associates. Certainly we saw none of them there.

A few minutes later Julius appeared, a young man, tall and rather good-looking, suave and easy. A word or two with Kennedy followed, during which a greenback changed hands—in fact that seemed to be the open sesame to everything here—and we were in the elevator escorted by the polished Julius.

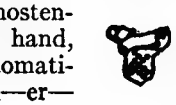
As we stood there a moment a gay party of revelers passed us, attired evidently for motoring. I was about to whisper something about the wild joy-riding that such a party was bound to end in, when Miss Kendall drew back into the car, to see without being seen. At the same time I noted a quick look of surprise on her face.

"One of them was Mrs. Temple," she whispered, when they had passed without glancing in. "You have heard of her? She and her husband, the millionaire patent medicine maker, have separated and she is supposed to be receiving a large settlement —over a million, I believe. Anyhow, she is not going back on the stage."

"Who were the others?"

"I don't know any of them. But that's interesting. This isn't like the ordinary places the Haxworth committee has investigated so far."

The door of the elevator shut noiselessly and it shot up to the next floor. Julius preceded us down the thickly carpeted corridor leading the way to a large apartment, or rather a suite of rooms, as handsomely furnished as any in other hotels. He switched on the lights and left us, with the remark, "When you want the waiter or anything, just press the button."



IN THE largest of the rooms was a dining-table and several chairs of Jacobean oak. A heavy sideboard and serving-table stood against opposite walls. Another, smaller room was furnished very attractively as a sitting-room. Deep, easy chairs stood in the corners and a wide, capacious davenport stretched across one wall. In another nook was a little divan or cosy corner.

Electric bulbs burned pinkly in the chandeliers and on silver candelabra on the table, giving a half light that was very romantic and fascinating. From a curtained window that opened upon an interior court we could catch strains from the cabaret singers below in the main dining-room. Everything was new and bright.

Kennedy pressed the button and a waiter brought a menu, imposing in length and breath-taking in rates.

"The cost of vice seems to have gone up with the cost of living," remarked Miss Kendall, as the waiter disappeared as silently as he had responded to the bell. It was a phrase that stuck in my head, so apt

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was it in describing the anomalous state of things we found as the case unrolled.

Craig ordered, now and then consulting Clare about some detail. The care and attention devoted to us could not have been more punctilious if it had been an elaborate dinner party.

"Well," he remarked, as the waiter at last closed the door of the private dining-room to give the order in downstairs in the kitchen, "the Little Montmartre makes a brave showing. I suppose it will be some time before the dinner arrives, though. There is certainly some piquancy to this," he added looking about at the furnishings.

"Yes," remarked Miss Kendall, "*risqué* from the moment you enter the door."

She said it with an impersonal tone as if there were complete detachment between herself as an observer and as a guest of the Montmartre.

"Miss Kendall," asked Kennedy, "did you notice anything particularly downstairs? I'd like to check up my own impressions by yours."

"I noticed that Titian beauty in the hotel office as we left the reception room and entered the elevator."

Craig smiled.

"So did I. I thought you would be both woman enough and detective enough to notice her. Well, I suppose if a man likes that sort of girl that's the sort of girl he likes. That's point number one. But did you notice anything else—as we came in, for instance?"

"No—except that everything seems to be a matter of scientific management here to get the most out of the suckers. This is no place for a piker. It all seems to run so smoothly, too. Still, I'm sure that our investigators might get something on the place if they kept right after it, although on the surface it doesn't look as if any law was being openly violated here. What do you mean? What is your point number two?"

"In the front window," resumed Craig, "just as you enter, I noticed one of those little oblong signs printed neatly in black on white—'Dr. Vernon Harris, M. D.' You recall that the letter said something about a doctor who was very friendly with that clique the writer mentioned? It's even money that this Harris is the one the writer meant. I suppose he is the 'house physician' of this gilded palace."

Clare nodded appreciatively. "Quite right," she agreed. "Just how do you think he might be involved?"

"Of course I can't say. But I think, without going any further, that a man like that in a place like this will bear watching anyway, without our needing more than the fact that he is here. Naturally we don't know anything about him as a doctor, but he must have some training; and in an environment like this—well, a little training may be a dangerous thing."

"The letter said something about drugs," mused Clare.

"Yes," added Kennedy. "As you know, alcohol is absolutely necessary to a thing like this. Girls must keep gay and attractive; they must meet men with a bright, unfaltering look, and alcohol just dulls the edge of conscience. Besides, look over that wine list—it fills the till of the Montmartre, judging by the prices. But then, alcohol palls when the pace is as swift as it seems to be here. Even more essential are drugs. You know, after all, it is no wonder so many drug fiends and drunkards are created by this life. Now, a doctor who is not overscrupulous, and he would have to be not over-scrupulous to be here at all, would find a gold mine in the dispensing of drugs and the toning up of drug fiends and others who have been going the pace too rapidly."

"Yes," she said. "We have found that some of these doctors are a great factor in the life of various sections of the city where they hang out. I know one who is deeply in the local politics and boasts that any resort that patronizes him is immune. Yes, that's a good point about Dr. Harris."

"I suppose your investigators have had more or less to do with watching the progress of drug habits?" ventured Craig.

"Very much," she replied, catching the drift of his remarks. "We have found, for instance, that there are a great many cases where it seems that drugs have been used in luring young and innocent girls. Not the old knockout drops—chloral, you know—but modern drugs, not so powerful, perhaps, but more insidious, and in that respect, I suppose, more dangerous. There are cocaine fiends, opium smokers; oh, lots of them. But those we find in the slums mostly. Still, I suppose there are all kinds of drugs up here in the White Light District—belladonna to keep the eyes bright, arsenic to whiten the complexion, and so on."

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"Yes," asserted Craig. "This section of the city may not be so brutal in its drug taking as others, but it is here—yes, and it is over on Fifth Avenue, too, right in society. Before we get through I'm sure we'll both learn much more than we dream of now."

THE door opened after a discreet tap from the waiter and the lavish dinner which Craig had ordered appeared. The door stayed open for a moment as the bus boy carried in the dishes. A rustle of skirts and low musical laughter was wafted in to us and we caught a glimpse of another gay party passing down the hall.

"How many private dining-rooms are there?" asked Craig of the waiter.

"Just this one, sir, and the next one, which is smaller," replied the model waiter, with the air of one who could be blind and deaf and dumb if he chose.

"Oh, then we were lucky to get this."

"Yes sir. It is really best to telephone first to Julius to make sure and have one reserved, sir."

Craig made a mental note of the information. The party in the next room were hilariously ordering, mostly from the wine list. None of us had recognized any of them, nor had they paid much attention to us.

Craig had eaten little, although the food was very good.

"It's a shame to come here and not see the whole place," he remarked. "I wonder if you would excuse me while I drop downstairs to look over things there—perhaps ingratiate myself with that Titian? Tell Miss Kendall about our visit to Bayard's office while I am gone, Walter."

There was not much that I could tell except the bare facts, but I thought that Miss Kendall seemed especially interested in that part which related to our discovery of the japanned box with the name "Padgett Estate (Trustees)."

I had scarcely finished when Craig returned. A glance at his face told me that even in this brief time something had happened.

"Did you meet the Titian?" I asked.

"Yes. She is the stenographer and sometimes works the switchboard of the telephone. I happened to strike the office while the clerk was at dinner and she was alone. While I was talking to her I was looking about and my eye happened to fall on one of the letter boxes back of the desk, marked 'Dr. Harris.' Well, at once I had an overwhelming desire to get a note which I saw sticking in it. So I called up a telephone number, just as a blind, and while she was at the switchboard I slipped the note into my pocket. Here it is."

He had laid an envelope down before us. It was in a woman's hand, written hastily.

"I'd like to know what was in it without Dr. Harris knowing it," he remarked. "Now, the secret service agents abroad have raised letter-opening to a fine art. Some kinds of paper can be steamed open without leaving a trace, and then they follow that simple operation by reburnishing the flap with a bone instrument. But that won't do. It might make this ink run."

Among the ornaments were several with flat wooden bases. Kennedy took one and placed it on the edge of the table, which was perfectly square. Then he placed the envelope between the table and the base.

"When other methods fail," he went on, "they place the envelope between two pieces of wood with the edges projecting about a thirty-second of an inch."

He had first flattened the edge of the envelope, then roughened it, and finally slit it open.

"Scientific letter opening," he remarked, as he pulled out a little note written on the hotel paper. It read:

DEAR HARRY:
Called you up twice and then dropped into the hotel, but you seem to be out all the time. Have something *very important* to tell you. Shall be busy to-night and in the morning, but will be at the *thé dansant* at the Futurist Tea Room to-morrow afternoon about four. Be sure to be there.
MARIE.

"I shall," commented Kennedy. "Now the question is, how to seal up this letter so that he won't know it has been opened. I saw some of this very strong mucilage in the office. Ring the bell, Walter. I'll get that impervious waiter to borrow it for a moment."

FIVE minutes later he had applied a hair line of the strong, colorless gum to the inside of the envelope and had united the edges under pressure between the two pieces of wood. As soon as it was dry he excused himself again and went back to the office, where he managed to secure an opportunity to stick the letter

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back in the box and chat for a few minutes longer with the Titian.

"There's a wild cabaret down in the main dining-room," he reported on his return. "I think we might just as well have a glimpse of it before we go."

Kennedy paid the check, which by this time had mounted like a taximeter running wild, and we drifted into the dining-room, a rather attractive hall, paneled in Flemish oak with artificial flowers and leaves about, and here and there a little bird concealed in a cage in the paper foliage.

As cabarets go, it was not bad, although I could imagine how wild it might become later in the evening or on special occasion.

"That Dr. Harris interests me," remarked Kennedy across the table at us. "We must get something in writing from him in some way. And then there's that girl in the office, too. She seems to be right in with all these people here."

Evidently the cabaret had little of interest to Miss Kendall, who, after a glance that took in the whole dining-room and disclosed none there in the gay crowd who, as far as we could see, had any relation to the case, seemed bored.

Craig noticed it and at once rose to go.

As we passed out and into the corridor, Miss Kendall turned and whispered, "Look over at the desk—Dr. Harris."

Sure enough, chatting with the stenographer was a man with one of those black bags which doctors carry. He was a young man in appearance, one of those whom one sees in the White Light District, with unnaturally bright eyes which speak of late hours and a fast pace. He wore a flower in his buttonhole—a very fetching touch with some women. Debonair, dapper, dashing, his face was not one readily forgotten. As we passed hurriedly I observed that he had torn open the note and had thrown the envelope, unsuspectingly, into the basket.

CHAPTER V

THE SCANDAL-MONGER

IT WAS early the following morning that I missed Kennedy from our apartment. Naturally I guessed from my previous experiences with that gentleman that he would most likely be found at his laboratory, and I did not worry, but put the finishing touches on a special article for the *Star*, which I had promised for that day and had already nearly completed.

Consequently it was not until the forenoon that I sauntered leisurely around to the Chemistry Building. Precisely as I expected, I found Kennedy there hard at work over a peculiar apparatus. As nearly as I can describe it, it consisted of a glass bottle with a rubber cork through which a tall slim funnel was fixed on one side and a tube on the other. The tube led to a U-shaped receptacle in which was a peculiar powder, the whole thing being supported by a standard. Thence from the other arm of the U-shaped tube a connection was made with a long straight tube of peculiar form, narrower at some points and widening out at others. The end was turned up and to it was fixed a burner similar to that of a gas jet. On it a flame of gas was burning.

"Has anything happened to-day?" I asked curiously.

"Carton was here this morning," he replied still engrossed in his work.

I waited for Kennedy to proceed, not wishing to interrupt him, though he had aroused my impatience.

"Yes," he resumed when he had reached a point which did not seem to require his undivided attention. "Carton was here. A very peculiar thing happened last night. There's a fellow Carton's men have been looking for for a long time in connection with the white slavery cases—'Black Jack' Stein. He's a cadet—at least, I suppose that is what you would call him.

"Well, Carton didn't want him in connection with this case at all, but it all goes to show how the whole thing is bound up together. This fellow, Black Jack, happened to get into a little disagreement with some of his cronies at the International Café last night and, to make a long story short, the row attracted the notice of one of Carton's men. To his surprise he saw Black Jack, who, they all thought, had skipped the State. He was a member, by the way, of Ike the Dropper's gang. Well, the officer didn't interfere just then, but for luck he stuck around until he saw Black Jack go out alone after settling his differences. He waited his opportunity and when he got a chance he covered the fellow and made a pinch. They found this letter on him. Evidently he had been picked to deliver it in person. He's under arrest now, but you know these fellows. They are such a

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close-mouthed crowd that you have about as much hope of getting any real information out of them as you have out of a Chinaman. Still, there is the letter which Carton turned over to me. Read it while you're waiting. I can't leave this tube."

Craig had indicated an open letter on a table in the corner, scarcely looking up from the work which absorbed his attention.

THE very first words almost made me rub my eyes with astonishment and read them over to make sure that I was not mistaken:

COLIN CLARKE,
Gotham Club, City.
DEAR COLLY:

I have just read of your engagement to Miss Padgett. I suppose congratulations are in order. I knew you'd land her. Only now that you have you mustn't forget us. I don't need to tell you that just at present we are all in a great deal of trouble over the activity of the District Attorney. We need money, if we are going to keep the witnesses away, whom he seems to want to bring before the Grand Jury. The bearer of this is one of them.

Bayard is gone now and we look to you. He was getting shaky anyhow. You must not fail. Stein will tell you how much he needs and in a day or two I will let you know who else must be taken care of. It won't cost much—nothing compared to what you stand to lose otherwise. You know you can trust us all. We're all in the same boat—in bad, too. If you don't come across there will be trouble not only for us but for yourself.

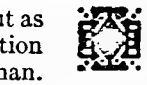
Yours,
MARIE.

"Marie again," I exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Craig absentmindedly. "It was a lucky pinch that Carton's man made. I don't know that this Black Jack has anything to do with our case directly. I guess we can disregard him; at any rate he's safely locked up if we want him. But the letter is important."

"You don't think it can be a stall?" I ventured, remembering what Miss Kendall had said about Clarke. "Those people up there at the Montmartre are clever. They might think it worth while to divert attention in this way. Clarke might like to pose as a victim instead of a principal."

"It may be so," he said, his mind only half on the letter now. "It looks like a polite form of blackmail to me, though. By the way, apparently Bayard didn't come up to the mark on something. Ah, there they are—the white fumes."



KENNEDY had forgotten all about the letter and was looking eagerly at the end of the apparatus which carried the jet of ignited gas. The flame was bluish white, with white fumes rising from it.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Some of the contents of that glass tube that I found in Bayard's scrap basket. I had an idea and I have been all the morning testing it out. This is the famous Marsh test for arsenic."

"Arsenic?" I repeated.

"Yes. It depends on the fact that when hydrogen is set free in an arsenical solution it liberates the arsenic as a gas, arseniuretted hydrogen, which can be separately examined. In this flask I have some pure granulated zinc, and that is covered with diluted pure sulphuric acid poured in through the funnel tube. Hydrogen is evolved and then is passed through this U-shaped drying tube filled with calcium chloride. Thence it goes into this long ignition tube, which is drawn out in such a way as to have three narrow constrictions and an upturned end. After the air is expelled I light the hydrogen and it burns with a pale blue flame.

"I have had to take the greatest pains in the experiment to have the chemicals perfectly free from arsenic and I have run a blank or control experiment at the same time upon the chemicals alone. Well, after I tested the apparatus, I poured in a little of a solution I made by washing off carefully the pieces of glass of that tube which I found in the basket.

"As you saw, the arseniuretted hydrogen was evolved almost immediately and the color of the flame of the gas changed to a bluish white with the white fumes of arsenious oxide."

He had taken a piece of cold porcelain and held it in the flame. On it a sort of metallic mirror was formed, a blackish-brown stain or ring.

"As little as one five-thousandth of a grain will produce that stain," he remarked enthusiastically, testing it with soluble bleaching powder and hypochlorite to make sure it could be nothing else. "If I heat the ignition tube through a wire gauze I can get inside of it a deposit of metallic arsenic. That is so delicate that it responds if there is one fifty-thousandth of a grain present. So, you see, it shows arsenic or some of its compounds, all right."

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"Then he really was a suicide, after all?"

"This does not prove that."

"He wouldn't be taking arsenic for fun."

"No, not for fun. But he might have been taking it, or rather something containing a derivative of arsenic combined with other drugs, as medicine, might he not?"

"I suppose so."

"And yet," enlightened Kennedy, going as far as he felt justified, "I am of your original opinion, Walter. It wasn't a natural death. Some one had a reason for wanting Bayard out of the way. I may not have arrived at how he was put out of the way, whether he did it himself or had it done for him, nor perhaps do I know who wanted him removed, but I think some one did."

"Which brings us back to this letter again," I said, tapping the letter which Carton had just turned over.

"To the letter," he repeated.

"What do you make of it?" I asked. "Do you think some one, Levine or Clarke, is trying to divert attention by appearing to be the pursued instead of the pursuer, or do you think it is in good faith and that some one is really trying to hold Clarke up?"

"Well," answered Craig, carefully avoiding the main question, "I have examined that letter very carefully, using the same methods as I did on the other one—the letter signed 'An Outcast.' You will notice that it is written on a typewriter also. My first suspicion was excited when I found several of the same peculiarities in it as in the first letter. I can't stop to go into them now. I shall tell you them later, for I confidently expect to get a third specimen of the writing soon and then I can talk about the whole affair intelligently. But for the present I can't be mistaken. This letter to Clarke and the anonymous letter which came to Carton were undoubtedly written on the same machine."

"But," I gasped, "can there be such a thing as organized blackmail going on, too? I already believe that there is a sort of organized abduction club, or whatever you may call it. Is there one for blackmail, too?"

"I don't know. You see here's where the difficulty with this letter lies. Whoever sent it—say, this 'Marie' for instance—knows by this time that it has been captured and that Carton must have it. Just how much more they know we can't guess. But what I would have liked to do, if I had only had a chance last night, would have been to photograph it and then let Black Jack go on his way and deliver it, so that we could see what happened. Of course that's impossible now. Every one concerned must have been on his guard hours ago."

"Yes, we could very well spare Black Jack if we could get at some one higher up."

"As it is, the best we can depend on is that Black Jack will give a very good example of a sphinx. We can get along without him, using the materials that we have, principally because we'll have to."

THE door opened and Clare Kendall entered with a cheery "Good morning." It was evident that she, too, had something to report.

"The letter to Phyllis Royce which you sent to the Montmartre has come back, unopened," she announced, taking from her handbag a letter stamped with the post-office form indicating that the addressee could not be found and that the letter was returned to the sender. The stamped hand of the post-office pointed to the upper left-hand corner where Clare had written in a fictitious name and used an address to which she frequently had mail sent when she wanted it secret.

"Only on the back," she pursued, turning the letter over, "there are some queer smudges. What are they? They don't look like dirt."

Kennedy glanced at it only casually, as if he had fully expected the incident to turn out as it did.

"Not unopened, Miss Kendall," he commented. "We have already had a little scientific letter opening. This was a case of scientific letter sealing. That was a specially prepared envelope."

He reached down into his desk and pulled out another, sealed it carefully, dried it, then held it over a steaming pan of water until the gum was softened and it could be opened again. On the back were smudges just like those on the letter that had been returned.

"On the thin line of gum on the flap of the envelope," he explained, "I have placed first a coating of tannin, over which is the gum. Then on the part of the envelope to which the flap adheres when it is sealed I placed some iron sulphate. When I sealed the envelope so carefully I brought the two together separated only by the thin film of gum. Now when steam is applied

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to soften the gum, the usual method of the letter-opener, the tannin and the sulphate are brought together. They run and leave these blots or dark smudges. So, you see, some one has been found at the Montmartre, even if it is not Phyllis Royce herself, who has interest enough in the case to open a letter to her before handing it back to the postman. That shows us that we are on the right trail at least, even if it does not tell us who is at the end of the trail. Here's another thing."

He handed Clare the letter which Carton had given him, telling her briefly how it had been obtained.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "So that hound, Black Jack Stein, has been caught at last. What a mess this is."

She read the letter slowly, weighing each word. Then she took a copy of it.

"I want to look up some of the history of these places and people," she remarked. "I expect to have something surprising to tell you about them soon. This 'Marie' is a new one to me, though. We must find out about her."

"At the Futurist Tea Room at four this afternoon, when she meets our good friend, young Dr. Harris," reminded Kennedy.

"Between cabarets and tea rooms I don't know whether this is work or play," exclaimed Clare whimsically.

"It's work, all right," smiled Kennedy, adding, "at least it would be if it weren't lightened by your help."

CHAPTER VI

THE *THÉ DANSANT*

IT WAS the middle of the afternoon when Craig and I left the laboratory to keep our appointment with Miss Kendall at the Futurist Tea Room, where we hoped to find Dr. Harris's friend "Marie," who seemed to want to see him so badly.

A long line of touring and town cars as well as taxicabs bore eloquent testimony not only to the popularity of this tea room and cabaret, but to the growth of afternoon dancing. One never realizes how large a leisure class there is in the city until after a visit to anything from a baseball game to a matinée—and a dance. People seemed literally to be flocking to the Futurist. They seemed to like its congeniality, its tone, its "atmosphere."

As we left our hats to the tender mercies of the "boys" who had the checking concession we could see that the place was rapidly filling up.

"If we are to get a table that we want here, we'd better get it now," remarked Kennedy, slipping the inevitable piece of change to the head waiter. "If we sit over there in that sort of little bower we can see when Miss Kendall arrives and we shall not be so conspicuous ourselves either."

The Futurist was not an especially ornate place, although a great deal of money had evidently been expended in fitting it up to attract a *recherché* clientele.

Our table, which Kennedy had indicated, was, as he had said, in a sort of little recess, where we could see without being much observed ourselves, although that seemed almost an impossibility in such a place. In fact, I noticed before we had had time to seat ourselves that we had already attracted the attention of two show girls who sat down the aisle and were amusing themselves at watching us by means of a mirror. It would not have been very difficult to persuade them to dispense with the mirror.

A moment later Clare Kendall entered and paused at the door an instant, absorbing the gay scene as only a woman and a detective could. Craig rose and advanced to meet her, and as she caught sight of us her face brightened. The show girls eyed her narrowly and with but slight approval.

"We feel more at ease with a lady in the party," remarked Craig, as they reached the table and I rose to greet her. "Two men alone here are quite as noticeable as two ladies. Walter, I know, was quite uncomfortable."

"To say nothing of the fact which you omitted," I retaliated, "that it is a pleasure to be with Miss Kendall—even if we must talk shop all the time."

Clare smiled, for her quick intuition had already taken in and dismissed as of no importance the two show-girls. We ordered as a matter of course, then settled back for a long interval until the waiter out of the goodness of his heart might retrieve whatever was possible from the mob of servitors like himself congested where refreshments were dispensed.

"Opposite us," whispered Clare, resting her chin on her interlocked fingers and her elbows on the tip edge of the table, "do you see that athletic-looking young lady, who

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seems to be ready for anything from tennis to tango? Well, that's Dorothy Padgett. The man with her is her fiancé, Clarke—you know, the man of whom I told you?"

Miss Padgett was quite apparently enjoying the afternoon to the utmost. From time to time some one would stop and talk to them and often it looked as if she were holding a levee.

"Evidently," remarked Miss Kendall, "persons of social position may descend to the Futurist without losing caste. There seem to be Bohemians here of all degrees."

Dorothy Padgett, at a distance at least, seemed to me to be one of those semi-sophisticated young persons who are always on the fringe of whatever is latest and promises a new thrill, yet never seem to lose themselves in the fascination which such things often exert over those with fewer interests in life. Yet I could not help thinking that her face showed that there was a more serious side to her character which circumstances had never brought out. I felt that now we saw her overflowing with pure vivacity and the joy of living.

Clarke was of the tall, sloping-shouldered variety, whom one can see on the Avenue and in the clubs and hotels in such numbers that it almost seems that there must be an establishment for turning them out, even down to a trademark concealed somewhere about them, "Made in England." Only Clarke seemed a little different in the respect that one felt that if all the others were stamped by the same die, he was the die, at least. Compared to him many of the others took on the appearance of spurious counterfeits. At any rate, as far as she had discovered, Miss Padgett liked him, recognized the real article, she thought, and perhaps might even love him, though I felt sure that it was his fascination rather than the man himself that attracted her.

While these observations were running through my head, I noticed that Clare had quietly shifted her chair so as to be entirely out of the line of vision of Dorothy and Clarke. Why she should not wish to be observed by them I could not see.

"Dr. Harris," Craig whispered, indicating to us the direction with his eyes.

OUTSIDE on a settee, we could see in the corridor a man waiting, restless and ill at ease. Now and then he looked covertly at his watch as if he expected some one who was late and he wondered if anything could be amiss.

Just then a superbly gowned woman alighted from a cab. The starter bowed as if she were familiar. It was evident that this was the woman for whom Harris waited, the "Marie" of the letter.

She was a carefully groomed woman, as artificial as French heels. Yet indeed it was that studied artificiality which constituted her chief attraction. As Harris greeted her I noted that Clare was amazed at the daring cut of her gown, which excited comment even at the Futurist.

Her smooth, full, well-rounded face with its dark olive skin and just a faint trace of color on either cheek, her snappy hazel eyes whose fire was heightened by the penciling of the eyebrows, all were a marvel of the dexterity of her artificial beautifier. And yet in spite of all there was an air of unextinguishable coarseness about her which it was difficult to describe, but easy to feel.

"Her lips are too thick and her mouth too large," remarked Clare, "and yet in some incomprehensible way she gives you the impression of daintiness. What is it?"

"The woman is frankly deceptive from the tip of her aigrette to the toes of her shoes," observed Craig.

"And yet," smiled Clare, watching with interest the little stir her arrival had made among the revelers, "you can see that she is the envy of every woman here who has slaved and toiled for that same effect without approaching within miles of it or attracting one quarter the notice for her pains that this woman receives."

Dr. Harris was evidently in his element at the attention which his companion attracted. They seemed to be on very good terms indeed, and one felt that Bohemianism could go no further.

They paused, fortunately, at a just vacated table around an "L" from us and sat down. For once waiters seemed to vie in serving rather than in neglecting.

By this time I had gained the impression that the Futurist was all that its name implied—not up to the minute, but decidedly ahead of it. There was an exotic flavor to the place, a peculiar fascination, that was foreign rather than American, at seeing demi-monde and decency rubbing elbows. I felt sure that a large percentage of the women there were really young married

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women, whose first step downward was truly nothing worse than saying they had been at their whist clubs when in reality it was tango and tea. What the end might be to one who let the fascination blind her perspective I could imagine.

"Look," said Clare, "there is that Mrs. Temple again."

She swept in with several of the gay party we had noticed the night before at the Montmartre. They paused for a moment to chat with Dorothy Padgett and Clarke. It was apparent that though Dorothy was not precisely of them, she saw nothing to criticize, or at least no reason to condemn. Clarke had the look of a man who thought there was a place for all things, but this was not just the place, as he endeavored to break off the conversation without giving offense.

"For some it seems to be the afternoon at the Futurist, the evening at the theater or beaches, and midnight at the Montmartre," observed Craig.

Dr. Harris and "Marie" were nearer the dancing floor than we were, but seemed oblivious to it. Now and then as the music changed we could catch a word or two.

He was evidently making an effort to be gay, to counteract the feeling which she had concealed as she came in, but which had the upper hand now that they were seated.

"Won't you dance?" I heard him say.

"No, Harry. I came here to tell you about how things are going."

There was a harshness about her voice which I recognized as belonging exclusively to one class of woman in the city. She lowered it as she went on talking earnestly.

"It looks as though some one has squealed but who——" I caught in the fragmentary lulls of the revelry.

"I didn't know it was as bad as that," Dr. Harris remarked.

They talked almost in whispers for several moments while I strained my ears to catch a syllable, but without success. What were they talking about? Was it about Black Jack? Or did they know something about Phyllis Royce? Perhaps it was about Bayard or even Clarke. Even when the music stopped they talked without dropping a word.

The music started again. This time Dorothy and Clarke were on the floor. There was no mistaking the appeal that the rocking whirl of the rhythmic dance made to them. And yet there was a grace about the dancing of Dorothy that robbed the steps of much that in other couples verged on the disgusting.

From the side of the table where Kennedy was seated he could catch an occasional glimpse of the face of Marie. I noticed that while I had been watching Clarke and Miss Padgett, Craig had torn a blank page off the back of the menu and with a stub of a pencil was half idly writing.

At the top he had placed the word, "Nose," followed by "straight, with nostrils a trifle flaring," and some other words I could not quite catch. Beneath that he had written "Ears," which in turn was followed by some words which he was setting down carefully. Eyes, chin and mouth followed, until I began to realize that he was making a sort of scientific analysis of the woman's features.

"I shall need some more——" I caught as the music softened unexpectedly.

A singer on the little platform was varying the program now by a solo and I shifted my chair so as to get a better view and at the same time also a look at the table around the corner from us.

As I did so I saw Dr. Harris reach into his breast pocket and take out a little package which he quickly handed to Marie. As their hands met, their eyes met also. I fancied that the doctor struggled to demagnetize, so to speak, the look she gave him.

"YOU'LL come to see me—afterwards?" she asked, dropping the little package into her handbag of gold mesh and rattling the various accouterments of beautification which tinkled next to it.

Harris nodded.

"You're a life saver to some——" floated over to me from Marie.

The solo had been completed and the applause was dying away.

" . . . tells me he needs . . . badly off . . . . don't forget to see . . . "

The words came in intervals. What they meant I did not know, but I strove to remember them. Evidently Marie and a host of others were depending on Harris for something. At any rate, it seemed, now that she had talked she felt easier in mind, as one does after carrying a weight a long time in secret.

"*Tanguez-vous?*" he asked as the orchestra struck up again.

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"Yes—thank you, Harry—just one."

We watched the couple attentively as they were alternately lost and found in the dizzy swaying mass. The music became wilder and they threw themselves into the abandon of the dance.

They had been absorbed so much in each other and the unburdening of whatever it was she had wanted to tell him, that neither had noticed the other couple on the other side of the floor whose presence had divided our own attention.

Clarke and Miss Padgett were not dancing. It was warm and they were among the lucky ones who had succeeded in getting something besides a check from the waiters. Two tall glasses of ginger ale with a long curl of lemon peel serpentining through the cracked ice stood before them.

I knew that Clarke had seen the woman, although she had not noticed him. Sooner or later, though, they would meet. I wondered what the psychological moment of their meeting would bring. Did he know of the intercepted letter signed "Marie?" I watched narrowly.

The dance had brought Dr. Harris and Marie squarely around to within a few feet of where Clarke was sitting. As Harris swung around she faced Clarke in such a way that he could not avoid her, nor could she have missed seeing him.

For a moment their eyes met. Not a muscle in either face moved. It was as if they were perfect strangers. She turned and murmured something to her partner. Clarke leaned over, without the least confusion, and made a witty remark to his fiancée. It was over in a minute. The acting of both could not have been better if they had deliberately practised their parts. What did it mean?

As the dance concluded I saw Clarke glance hastily over in the direction of Marie. Miss Padgett's face was turned. He gave a quick smile of recognition, as much as to say "Thank you."

It was evident now that both Dr. Harris and Marie, whoever she was, were getting ready to leave. As they rose to move to the door, Kennedy quickly paid our own check, leaving the change to the waiter, and without seeming to do so we followed them.

Harris was standing near the starter with his hat off, apparently making his adieux. Deftly Kennedy managed to slip in behind so as to be next in line for a cab.

"Walter and I will follow Harris if they separate," he whispered to Clare Kendall. "You follow the woman."

The afternoon was verging toward dinner and people were literally bribing the taxicab starter. Our own cab stood next in line behind that which Harris had called.

"I have certainly enjoyed this little glimpse of Bohemia," commented Kennedy to Miss Kendall as we waited. "I shouldn't mind if detective work took me more often to afternoon dances. There, they are going down the steps. Here's the cab I called. Let me know how things turn out. Good-by. Here—chauffeur, around that way—where that other cab is going—the lady will tell you where to drive."

CHAPTER VII

BLACK AND TAN

HARRIS hesitated a moment as if considering whether to take a cab himself, then slowly turned and strolled down the street.

We followed, slowly also. There was something unreal about the bright afternoon sunshine after the atmosphere of the Futurist Tea Room, where everything had been done to promote the illusion of night.

Harris walked along meditatively, crossing one street after another, not as if debating where he was going, but rather in no great hurry to get there.

Instead of going down Broadway he swerved into Seventh Avenue, then after a few blocks turned into a side street, quickened his pace, and at last dived down into a basement under a saloon.

It was a wretched neighborhood, one of those which reminds one of the life of an animal undergoing a metamorphosis. Once it had evidently been a rather nice residential section. The movement of population uptown had left it stranded to the real estate speculators, less desirable to live in, but more valuable for the future. The moving in of any one who could be got to live there had led to rapid deterioration and a mixed population of whites and negroes against the day when the upward sweep of business should bring the final transformation into office and loft buildings. But for the present it was decaying, out of repair, a mass of cheap rooming-houses, tenements, and mixed races.

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The joint into which Harris had gone was the only evidence of anything like prosperity on the block, and that evidence was confined to the two entrances on the street, one leading into the ground floor and the other down a flight of steps to the basement.

"Do you want to go in?" asked Kennedy in a tone that indicated that he himself was going.

Just then a negro, dazzling in the whiteness of his collar and the brilliancy of his checked suit, came up the stairs accompanied by a light mulatto.

"It's a black and tan joint," Craig went on, "at least downstairs—negro cabaret, and all that sort of thing."

"I'm game," I replied.

We stumbled down the worn steps, past a swinging door near which stood the proprietor with a careful eye on arrivals and departures. The place was deceiving from the outside. It really extended through two houses, and even at this early hour it was fairly crowded.

There were negroes of all degrees of shading, down to those who were almost white. Scattered about at the various tables were perhaps half a dozen white women, tawdry imitations of the faster set at the Futurist which we had just left, the left-overs of a previous generation in the Tenderloin. There was also a fair sprinkling of white men, equally degraded. White men and colored women, white women and colored men, chatted here and there, but for the most part the habitués were negroes. At any rate the leveling down seemed to have produced something like an equality of races in viciousness.

As we sat down at a table, Kennedy remarked: "They used to drift down to Chinatown, a good many of these relics. You used to see them in the old 'suicide halls' of the Bowery, too. But that is all passing away now. Reform and agitation have closed up those old dives. Now they try to veneer it over with electric lights and bright varnish, but I suppose it comes to the same thing. After they are cast off Broadway, the next step lower is the black and tan joint. After that it is suicide, unless it is death."

"I don't think this is any improvement over the—the bad old days," I ventured.

Kennedy shook his head in agreement. "There's Harris, down there in the back, talking to some one, a white man, alone."

A waiter came over to us grinning, for we had assumed the rôle of sightseers.

"Who is that, 'way back there, with his chair tipped to the wall, talking to the man with his back to us?" asked Kennedy.

"Ike the Dropper, sah," informed the waiter with obvious pride that such a celebrity should be harbored here.

I looked with a feeling akin to awe at the famous character who, in common with many others of his type, had migrated uptown from the proverbial haunts of the gunmen on the East Side in search of pastures new and untroubled.

Ike the Dropper may have once been a strong-arm man, but at present I knew that he was chiefly noted for the fact, and he and his kind were reputed to be living on the earnings of women to whom they were supposed to afford "protection." I reflected on the passing glories of brutality which had sunk so low.

THERE were noise and life a plenty here. At a discordant box of a piano a negro performer was playing with a keen appreciation of time if of nothing else, and two others with voices that might not have been unpopular in a decent minstrel show were rendering a popular air. They wore battered straw hats and a make-up which was intended to be grotesque.

From time to time, as the pianist was moved, he played snatches of the same music as that which we had heard at the Futurist, and between us and Harris and Ike the Dropper several couples were turkey-trotting, each in their own sweet way. As the music became more lively their dancing came more and more to resemble some of the almost brutal Apache dances of Paris, in that the man seemed to exert sheer force and the woman agility in avoiding him. It was an entirely new phase of afternoon dancing, an entirely new "leisure class," this strange combination of Bohemia and Senegambia.

At a table next to us, so near that we could almost rub elbows with them, sat a white man and a white woman. They had been talking in low tones, but I could catch whole sentences now and then, for they seemed to be making no extraordinary effort at concealment.

"He was framing a sucker to get away with a whole front," I heard the man say,

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"or with a poke or a souper, but instead he got dropped by a flatty and was canned for a sleep."

"Two dips—pickpockets," whispered Craig. "Some one was trying to take everything a victim had, or at least his pocketbook or watch, but instead he was arrested by a detective and locked up over night."

"Good work," I laughed. "You are 'some' translator."

I looked at our neighbors with a certain amount of respect. Were they framing up something themselves? At any rate I felt that I would rather see them here and know what they were than to be jostled by them in a street car. The sleek proprietor kept a careful eye on them and I knew that a sort of unwritten law would prevent them from trying on anything that would endanger their welcome in a joint none too savory already.

Nevertheless I was quite interested in the bits of pickpocket argot that floated across to us, expressions like "crossing the mit," "nipping a slang," a "mouthpiece," "making a holler" and innumerable other choice bits as unintelligible to me as "Beowulf."

After a few minutes the woman got up and went out, leaving the man still sitting at the table. Of course it was none of my business what they were doing, I suppose, but I could not help being interested.

That diversion being ended, I joined Kennedy in his scrutiny of Harris and his choice friend. Of course at our distance it was absolutely impossible to gain any idea of what they were talking about, and indeed our chief concern was not to attract any attention. Whatever it was, they were very earnest about it and paid no attention to us.

The dancing had ceased and the two "artists" were entertaining the select audience with some choice bits of ragtime. We could see Ike the Dropper and Dr. Harris still talking.

Suddenly Kennedy nudged me. I looked up in time to see Dr. Harris reach into his inside breast pocket again and quietly slip out a package much like that which we had already seen him hand to Marie at the Futurist. Ike took it, looked at it a moment with some satisfaction, then stuffed it down carefully into the right-hand outside pocket of his coat.

"I wonder what that is that Harris seems to be passing out to them?" mused Craig.

"Drugs, perhaps," I ventured offhand.

"Maybe. I'd like to know for certain."

Just then Harris and Ike rose and walked down on the other side of the place toward the door. Kennedy turned his head so that even if they should look in our direction they would not see his face. I did the same. Fortunately neither seemed interested in the other occupants. Harris having evidently fulfilled his mission, whether of delivering the package or receiving news which Ike seemed to be pouring into his ear, had but one thought, to escape from a place which was evidently distasteful to him. At the door they paused for a moment and spoke with the proprietor. He nodded reassuringly once or twice to Dr. Harris, much to the relief, I thought, of that gentleman.

Kennedy was chafing under the restraint which kept him in the background and prevented any of his wizardry of mechanical eavesdropping. I fancied that his roving eye was considering various means of utilizing his seemingly inexhaustible ingenuity if occasion should arise.

At last Harris managed to shake hands good-by and disappeared up the steps to the sidewalk still followed by Ike.

Kennedy leaned over and looked the "dip" sitting alone back of us squarely in the face.

"WOULD you like to make twenty-five dollars—just like that?" he asked with a quick gesture that accorded very well with the slang.

The man looked at him very suspiciously, as if considering what kind of new game this was.

"That was your gun moll who just went out, wasn't it?" pursued Kennedy with assurance.

"Aw, come off. Whatyer givin' us?" responded the man half angrily.

"Don't stall. I know. I'm not one of the bulls, either. It's just a plain proposition. Will you or won't you take twenty-five of easy money?"

Kennedy's manner seemed to mystify him. For a moment he looked us over, then seemed to decide that we were all right.

"How?" he asked in a harsh but not wholly ungracious whisper. "I'll tip yer off if the boss is lookin'. He don't like no frame-ups in here."

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"You saw Ike the Dropper go out with that man?"

"The guy with the glasses?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"The guy with the glasses gave Ike a little package which Ike put into the right hand outside pocket of his coat. Now it's worth twenty-five beans to me to get that package—get me?"

"I gotyer. Slip me a five now and the other twenty if I get it."

Kennedy appeared to consider.

"I'm on the level," pursued the dip. "Me and the goil is in hard luck with a mouthpiece who wants fifty bucks to beat the case for one of the best tools we ever had in our mob that they got right to-day."

"From that I take it that one of your pals needs fifty dollars for a lawyer to get him out of jail. Well, I'll take a chance. Bring the package to me at—well, the Prince Henry café. I'll be there at seven o'clock."

The pickpocket nodded, slid from his place and sidled out of the joint without attracting any attention.

"What's the lay?" I asked.

"Oh, I just want that package, that's all. Come on, Walter. We might as well go before any of these yellow girls speak to us and frame up something on us."

The proprietor bowed as much as to say, "Come again and bring your friends."

Ike was nowhere to be seen when we reached the street, but down the block we caught sight of Dr. Harris on the next corner. Kennedy hastened our pace until we were safely in his wake, then managed to keep just a few paces behind him.

Instead of turning into the street where the Futurist was, Harris kept on up Broadway. It was easy enough to follow him in the crowd now without being perceived.

He turned into the street where the Little Montmartre was preparing for a long evening of entertainment. We turned, and to cover ourselves got into a conversation with a hack driver who seemed suddenly to have sprung from nowhere with the cryptic whisper, "Drive you to the Ladies' Club, gents."

Out of the tail of his eye Kennedy watched Harris. Instead of turning into the Montmartre and his office, he went past to a high-stooped brownstone house, two doors away, climbed the steps and entered.

We sauntered down the street and looked quickly at the house. A brass sign on the wall beside the door read, "Mme. Margot's Beauty Shop."

"I see," commented Kennedy. "You know women of the type who frequent the Futurist and the Montmartre are always running to the hairdressing and manicure parlors. They make themselves 'beautiful' under the expert care of the various specialists and beauty doctors. Then, too, they keep in touch that way with what is going on in the demi-monde. That is their club, so to speak. It is part of the beauty shop's trade to impart such information—at least of a beauty shop in this neighborhood."

I regarded the place curiously.

"Come, Walter, don't stare," nudged Kennedy. "Lets take a turn down to the Prince Henry and wait. We can get a bite to eat, too."

I had hardly expected that the pickpocket would play fair, but evidently the lure of the remaining twenty dollars was too strong. We had scarcely finished our dinner when he came in.

"Here it is," he whispered. "The house man here at the Prince Henry knows me. Slip me the twenty."

Kennedy leisurely tore the wrappings from the packet.

"I suppose you have already looked at this first and found that it isn't worth anything to you compared to twenty dollars. Anyhow, you kept your word. Hello—what is it?"

He had disclosed several small glass tubes with pointed ends. Inside each, sealed, was a peculiar glistening yellowish powder.

"H'm," mused Kennedy, "another job for the chemist. Here's the bankroll."

"Thanks," grinned the dip as he disappeared through the revolving door.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TYPEWRITER CLUE

WE HAD returned to the laboratory that night where Kennedy was preparing to continue his experiments on the yellow powder which he had secured in the queer tubes that came from Dr. Harris. The door opened and Clare Kendall entered.

"I've been calling you up all over town," she said, "and couldn't find you. I have something that will interest you, I think. You said you wanted something written by Dr. Harris. Well, there it is."

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She laid a sheet of typewriting on the laboratory table.

"How did you get it?" asked Kennedy in eager approbation.

"When I left you at the Futurist Tea Room to follow that woman Marie in the cab, I had a good deal of trouble. I guess people thought I was crazy, the way I was ordering that driver about, but he was so stupid and he would get tangled up in the traffic on Fifth Avenue. Still, I managed to hang on, principally because I had a notion already that she was going to the Montmartre. Sure enough, she turned down that block, but she didn't go into the hotel after all. She stopped and went into a place two doors down—Mme. Margot's Beauty Parlor."

"Just where we finally saw Harris go," exclaimed Kennedy. "I beg pardon for interrupting."

"Of course I couldn't go in right after her, so I drove around the corner. Then it occurred to me that it would be a good time to stop in to see Dr. Harris—when he was out. You know my experience with the fakers has made me pretty good at faking up ailments. Then, too, I knew that it would be easy when he was not there. I said I was an old patient and had an appointment and that I'd wait, although I knew those were not his regular office hours. He has an alleged trained nurse there all the time. She let me into his waiting-room on the second floor in front—you remember the private dining-rooms are in back. I waited in momentary fear that he *would* come back. You see, I had a scheme of my own. Well, I waited until at last the nurse had to leave the office for a short time.

"That was my chance. I tiptoed over to his desk in the next room. On it were a lot of letters. I looked over them but could find nothing that seemed to be of interest. They were all letters from other people. But they showed that he must have quite an extensive practise and that he is not overscrupulous. I didn't want to take anything that would excite suspicion unless I had to. Just then I heard some one coming down the corridor from the elevator. I had just time to get back to a chair in the waiting-room when the door opened and there was that Titian from the office, you remember. She saw me without recognizing me, went in and laid some papers on his desk. As soon as she was gone, I went in again and looked them over. Here was one that she had copied for him. There are interlineations in his own handwriting between the lines of typewriting."

Kennedy had been carefully scrutinizing the sheet of paper as she told how she obtained it.

"It couldn't be better as far as our purposes are concerned," he congratulated. "It seems to consist of some notes he had made and wished to preserve about drugs."

I leaned over and read:

VERONAL.—Diethylmalonyl or diethylbarbituric acid. A hypnotic used extensively. White, crystalline, odorless, slightly bitter. Best in ten to fifteen grain cachets. Does not affect circulatory or respiratory systems or temperature. Toxicity low: 135 gr. taken with no serious result. Unreasonable use for insomnia, however, may lead to death.

HEROIN.—Constant use of heroin has been known to lead to——

I looked inquiringly at Kennedy.

"Just some fragmentary notes which he had evidently been making. Rather interesting in themselves as showing perhaps something of his practise, but not necessarily incriminating."

While we were discussing the contents of the notes, Kennedy had laid over the typewritten sheet the rules and graduated strip of glass which he had used in examining the first letter signed "An Outcast," and in the blackmail letter that had been intercepted on its way to Clarke.

A moment later he had pulled these other two letters from a drawer where he kept them, had laid the three pieces of writing side by side and was comparing them, going from one to the other successively.

"PEOPLE generally, who have not investigated the subject," he remarked as he worked, "hold the opinion that the typewriter has no individuality. Fortunately that is not true. The typewriting machine does not always afford an effective protection to the criminal. On the contrary, the typewriting may be a direct means of tracing a document to its source and showing it to be what it really is. This is especially true of typewritten anonymous letters. Without careful investigation it is impossible to say what can be determined from the examination of any particular piece of typewriting, but typewriting can often be positively identified

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as being the work of a certain particular typewriting machine and even the date of writing can sometimes be found out."

He had been carefully counting something under the lens of a pocket glass. "Even the number of threads to the inch in the ribbon, as shown in the type impression, plainly seen and accurately measured by the microscope or in an enlarged photograph, may show something about the identity of a disputed writing."

He was pointing to a letter "r." Under the glass I noticed that there was a break in the little curl at the top.

"Now if you find such a break in the same letter in another piece of typewriting, what would you think?"

"That they were from the same machine," I replied.

"Not so fast," he cautioned. "True, it might raise a presumption that it was from the same machine. But the laws of chance would be against your enthusiasm, Walter."

"Of course," I admitted on second thought.

"It's just like the finger print theory. There must be a sort of summation of individual characteristics. Now here's a broken 'l' and there is an 'a' that is twisted. Now, if the same defects are found in another piece of writing, that makes the presumption all the stronger, and when you have massed together a number of such characteristics it raises the presumption to a mathematical certainty, does it not?"

I nodded and he went on. "The faces of many letters inevitably become broken, worn or battered. Not only does that tend to identify a particular machine, but it is sometimes possible, if you have certain admitted standard specimens of writing covering a long period, to tell just when a disputed writing was made. There are two steps in such an inquiry, the first the determination of the fact that a document was written on a certain particular kind of machine and the second that it was written on a certain individual machine of that make. I have here specimens of the writing of all the leading machines. It is easy to pick out the make used, say in the 'Outcast' letter. Moreover, as I said when I first saw that letter, it is in the regular pica type. So are they all, but as ninety-five per cent. use the pica style that in itself proved nothing."

"What is that bit of ruled glass?" asked Clare, bending over the letters in deep interest.

"In ordinary typewriting," replied Craig, "each letter occupies an imaginary square, ten to the inch horizontally and six to the inch vertically. Typewriting letters are in line both ways. This ruled glass plate is an alinement test plate for detecting defects in alinement. I have also here another glass plate in which the lines diverge each at a very slightly different angle—a typewriting protractor for measuring the slant of divergence of various letters that have become twisted, so to speak.

"When it is in perfect alinement the letter occupies the middle of each square and when out of alinement it may be in any of the four corners, or either side of the middle position or at the top or bottom above or below the middle. That, you see, makes nine positions in all—or eight possible divergences from normal in this particular alone."

Clare had been using the protractor herself, quickly familiarizing herself with it.

"Another possible divergence," went on Kennedy, "is the perpendicular position of the letter in relation to the line. That is of great value in individualizing a machine. It is very seldom that machines, even when they are new, are perfect in this particular. It does not seem much until you magnify it. Then any one can see it, and it is a characteristic that is fixed, continuous, and not much changed by variations in speed or methods of writing.

"Here's another thing. Typewriter faces are not flat like printing type, but are concaved to conform to the curve of the printing surface of the roller. When they are properly adjusted all portions should print uniformly. But when they are slightly out of position in any direction the two curved surfaces of type and roller are not exactly parallel and therefore don't come together with uniform pressure. The result is a difference in intensity in different parts of the impression."

It was fascinating to see Craig at work over such minute points which we had never suspected in so common a thing as ordinary typewriting.

"Then you can identify these letters positively?" asked Clare.

"Positively," answered Craig. "If two machines of the same make were perfect to

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begin with and in perfect condition—which is never found to be the case when they are critically examined—the work from one would be theoretically indistinguishable from that of another until actual use had affected them differently. The work of any number of machines begins inevitably to diverge as soon as they are used. Since there are thousands of possible particulars in which differences may develop, it very soon becomes possible to identify positively the work of a particular typewriting machine."

"How about the operator?" I asked curiously.

"Different habits of touch, spacing, speed, arrangement and punctuation all may also tend to show that a particular piece of writing was or was not done by one operator. In other words, typewriting individuality in many cases is of the most positive and convincing character and reaches a degree of certainty which may almost be described as absolute proof. The identification of a typewritten document in many cases is exactly parallel to the identification of an individual who precisely answers a general description as to features, complexion, size, and in addition matches a long detailed list of scars, birthmarks, deformities and individual peculiarities."

TOGETHER we three began an exhaustive examination of the letters, each taking one letter, and as Kennedy called off the various characteristics of each type on the standard keyboard we checked them up. It did not take long to convince us, nor would it have failed to convince the most sceptical, that all three had come from the same source and the same writer.

"You see," concluded Kennedy triumphantly, "we have advanced a long step nearer the solution of at least one of the problems of this case."

Miss Kendall had evidently been thinking quickly and turning the matter over in her mind.

"But," she spoke up quickly, "even that does not point to the same person as the author—not the writer, but the author—of the three pieces of writing."

"No indeed," agreed Craig. "There is much left to be done. As a matter of fact, there might have been one author, or there might have been three authors, although all the mechanical work was done by one person. But we are at least sure that we have localized the source of the writing. We know that it is from the Montmartre that the letters have come. We know that it is in some way that that place and some of the people who frequent it are connected with the disappearance of Phyllis Royce and the death of Bayard."

"In other words," supplied Clare, "we are going to get at the truth through that Titian-haired stenographer."

"Exactly."

Clare had risen to go.

"It quite takes my breath away to think that we are really making such progress against the impregnable Montmartre. Would you mind if I made a—a request?"

"Not at all. I should be happy," assured Craig.

"At various times the investigators Mr. Haxworth has had at work have been piecing together little bits of information about that place. I shall have the whole record put together to-night. We have gone so far that I think my own employer should know just what I am doing with my time. Would you—mind meeting us to-morrow morning and going over the thing with him?"

I thought I detected just a trace of an appeal in her tone.

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure, Miss Kendall," responded Kennedy promptly.

"I shall let you know about it the first thing in the morning," she said as she rose to go.

The door had scarcely closed when Kennedy turned quickly to me and remarked, "That girl has something on her mind. I wonder what it is?"

Chapter IX

The Sacrifice

GUY HAXWORTH was of the sort that one likes to see among the younger generation of the very wealthy. Instead of being engaged wholly in having a good time, he seemed to feel the responsibilities of his millions.

Tall, slim, almost ascetic in face, he was known in his college days to have been the stroke of the best crew that Princeton had developed when rowing was a new sport at

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that university. Indeed, there was something of the pioneer about Haxworth, as there had been about the ancestor who came to America and founded the Haxworth fortune. Whether it had been in his studies or his sports or now in the recreations of his busy life, Haxworth was always doing something new and different from other men.

We met, according to the appointment which Miss Kendall made for us, in the library of his house on upper Fifth Avenue, a huge pile of stone facing the Park, with ground enough around it to produce the illusion that you were in the suburbs.

"I'm glad to meet you, Professor Kennedy," he welcomed, shaking hands with me also, and turning again to Craig, whom Miss Kendall, who was already waiting, had presented to him first. "Often I have heard of the work of you and Mr. Jameson and wanted to meet you. I trust that the present case will prove no exception to the rule of success that you have established."

"With the aid of your chief investigator, Miss Kendall," replied Craig gracefully "—the indispensable aid, I might say—I think it will be no exception, provided there is any such rule."

The compliment to Clare seemed to please Haxworth and I am sure that she colored just a bit at the praise which Kennedy gave unstintedly.

Haxworth had turned to her.

"I understand, Miss Kendall, that the case at last puts us on the trail of the Montmartre, which you have always said was the hardest of all the places to close."

"Yes, Mr. Haxworth. But now I believe that if it is at all possible the outcome of the search for Phyllis Royce will accomplish that."

Haxworth shook his head pensively.

"It is one of the tragedies of human life," he remarked, "that no reform ever seems to have been accomplished without the sacrifice of some one. I hope this will be different. I hope you will be able to locate that poor girl before such a sacrifice takes place. It is to save girls like that that I went into this thing. I often wonder how long it will be before people realize that this sort of thing does not concern a few thousands in the underworld, but may at any moment affect some one dear to themselves, may even affect themselves, directly or indirectly?"

I could see that there was a genuineness in Haxworth's feelings that the editors who sometimes made fun of his reforms had never appreciated. He was in reality a striking example of the younger generation of college men who are succeeding an older generation whose perceptibly lower ideals are now passing away. What this new generation may accomplish in a decade it is impossible to predict.

"You see, Professor Kennedy," he went on, turning to Craig, "my observation taught me at the start that the forces of evil are never greatly alarmed at reformers. They know that the wave quickly subsides; at least it always has. Busy people can't turn away from their work for a long time. They forget. But I've plenty of time and I don't forget. I have time to keep after them, to form a permanent organization that will prevent these patient denizens of the underworld from reappearing with their exploitation of vice and crime. Miss Kendall and her investigators are always at work.

"Now, as I understand it," he pursued, "the Montmartre is run outwardly exactly like a hotel. It is very difficult to get the evidence against it, such as, say, against the Raines law hotel, the saloon back room for women, and the regular resorts which we are closing. Here we are up against the most entrenched form of commercialized vice, what they themselves consider an impregnable citadel. If we can break up this gang it will throw a scare into all the lesser gangs and exploiters in the city that they will never forget. And these people are making the fight of their lives against Carton, against my organization and against you. Now," he concluded, addressing his question to Clare rather than to us, "how do you propose to go about getting evidence against this place?"

It was evident that one purpose Miss Kendall had in mind was for us to get a clearer understanding of the whole situation and the larger issues involved in the case.

"I have not discussed that phase of it with Professor Kennedy," she remarked simply. "So far, we have been concerned only with tracing Phyllis Royce."

"Quite right," rejoined Haxworth enthusiastically. "But how about the Phyllis Royces of the future? That is what interests me as much as Phyllis Royce herself now."

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The millionaire had turned to Kennedy.

"I don't suppose I have ever been much of a social reformer," remarked Kennedy slowly, weighing the matter carefully, "except for catching all kinds of crooks and trying to prove to them that theirs is a losing and increasingly impossible game. But since the subject has been opened up, I may say that I am in sympathy with anything that goes directly to the root of the crime problem which I have always been fighting with science. I mean to say that I am behind anything that will tend to decrease crime by preventing it in the first place. Such places as the Montmartre make for crime. This very case proves it. We should never have been associated unless we had been brought together by our various roads in fighting vice and crime. Therefore, I am for going further and taking hold of the larger issues involved in the Phyllis Royce case—closing that swell joint, if we can—but first of all finding Phyllis Royce."

"That's it," agreed Haxworth. "You put it just right. Now, from my standpoint —and I suppose I'm one of those of whom some one has said that I 'have vice in my head'—I welcome having a fresh mind brought to bear on these questions which I have been trying to deal with. Suppose you try to outline some method of proceeding?"

Kennedy was evidently thinking of Clare's request of the night before that we should meet Haxworth, and wondering what lay back of it.

"I should rather hear first what Miss Kendall has to say," he remarked. "I fancy that she has something to tell."

"I HAVE," she replied slowly, as if not quite sure how to tell it. "For some time it has been impressed on my mind that among the many methods that have been suggested for the control and the elimination of vice, perhaps publicity is one of the most powerful weapons. I don't think in these days one has to stop to prove or to defend that. People are aroused over this sort of thing and the old attitude of silence is passing away.

"Now for some time I have had my investigators at work with a list of the known places that are still running. They have been looking up the property owners and the leaseholders of such places, and something of the history of each place. We have it all carefully indexed in our files, ready to back up any statement that we may have occasion to make.

"My idea has been that when it is proved that a resort is of an evil character and in some way it still remains open in spite of the fact, it should be provided by law, as it is in some States, that a brief description of the character of the place, followed by the name of the owner of the property and of the lessee, should be placed in a conspicuous position on the door."

While she was talking, Clare had taken a little oblong nickel plate from her hand bag and was holding it in her hand, thoughtfully regarding it.

"In going over our lists," she resumed, "I find that our investigators have made some surprising revelations. The fact is that some of the places of worst repute in this city belong to those of the highest respectability. I do not mean that they operate such places. Far from it. Nor do they always know that the property they own is being used for such purposes. Frequently they do not. Sometimes they do not care. They are content to shift the blame to some one else, an agent, perhaps; but they go on taking in this tainted money —and it is that, if money ever is tainted. Then, in other cases they do care. Indeed, sometimes my investigators have been able to close up some of these evil resorts merely by taking the evidence, placing it before the owners, and appealing to them. Still, you would be surprised how many have refused, have said it was the agent's business. They don't seem to care. They seem to feel that they are not their brothers' or their sisters' keepers."

Haxworth was listening intently. I knew from Miss Kendall's manner that she was leading up to something very important.

"Often," she went on earnestly, "large estates, covering perhaps whole blocks in the city, seem to have become almost notorious in this respect. In fact there are little spots all over the city where gambling and vice of all sorts are segregated in this way. Some of the foremost citizens are reaping in decency the profits of indecency."

She grew more and more earnest as she proceeded. It was evident that she was unburdening something that troubled her.

"I realize," she said, "that when one gets into anything of this sort he can make most

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powerful enemies, that there is only the sense of doing a public service for his reward and that he must be absolutely sure of his ground before he takes any steps."

Haxworth nodded.

"This case of the Montmartre," resumed Clare, coming directly to the point, "seems to be one of those cases which I have endeavored to describe to you. I have prepared a sample nameplate which might be put on the door, if we had such a law, but which I have had made simply as a striking example of the condition which exists to-day."

Miss Kendall laid the nickel plate on the table before us.

We read it in amazement:

OWNED BY THE PADGETT ESTATE

"More than that," she concluded tersely, "other houses on the same block belong to this wealthy estate, and before we finish our investigations it seems altogether likely that we shall have something to say about them, too."

I THINK it must have been my newspaper instinct which dominated me unconsciously as I scented at once the big story that was contained in her simple words. I had already been studying the face and manner of young Haxworth, thinking perhaps that I might sometime be called on to write a character sketch of a man who seemed destined to take an active place in the new life of the city.

At any rate, when Clare uncovered the nameplate, I happened to be looking at Haxworth, rather than, as the rest were, at the plate itself. A most peculiar look of distress seemed to cross his frank countenance as he read the words of the engraved indictment.

"Are you sure of this?" he asked in a tone which others could not help noticing.

He had picked up the plate and was weighing it carefully in his hand.

"Absolutely sure," replied Clare who had noted the expression and seemed to be prepared for it. "It is a matter of record."

It flashed over me what she had meant by the remark that it was easy to make powerful enemies in such a fight.

"Bayard, the murdered banker, managed the estate," exclaimed Kennedy. "That shows how widely this thing ramifies."

To say that Haxworth was surprised, would have been putting it mildly, as, one after the other, revelations were forced on him. His face knitted; he rose and paced down the long library and came back to where we were sitting. There was evidently an intense struggle going on within him, one in which we could not share or help. I felt sorry for him.

Why should he feel so deeply over it? I asked myself. Surely he was rich and powerful enough to defy the Padgett estate. There was no financial interest involved which might affect him. Surely he had gone far enough to care nothing now about the warped opinions of those of his own class who might condemn him for his course of action. What was it?

I think it must have dawned on us all simultaneously. Clare saw it with her quick woman's intuition and it was evident that she had not suspected it, or if she had that she thought it was now forgotten. To Kennedy and myself it was obvious the more we thought of his actions and the tone of his voice.

Haxworth was in love with Dorothy Padgett.

Quickly my mind ran over the events of the day before. There was no doubt that Dorothy at least thought she was thoroughly captivated by the dashing young clubman, or that Clarke on his part appeared to be wholly devoted to Dorothy.

I recalled how she had chatted with Mrs. Temple and others at the Futurist and then suddenly I remembered that covert nod that Clarke had given the mysterious Marie.

Here was a situation.

Before the thought was half formed that Haxworth himself could have had anything to do with the blackmailing and incriminating letter to Clarke, I banished it entirely. That was not his method of working. He was incapable of such a thing.

Back and forth the case had led us, from protected vice and the high lights and deep shadows of the city, down to the lowest depths of sordidness, from the underworld on up to the very pinnacle of the upperworld, taking in at one sweep all classes and elements of society. I was amazed and appalled at what had seemed at the start to be merely a simple question in law and ethics. How far did the thing go? What would he do?

I could see on his face the conflict raging,

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the quick balancing of one factor against another in the effort to arrive at the right course of action. If he took a step that would work injury to the Padgett estate, that would further alienate him from her, if by chance she should change her feelings toward Clarke. More than that, would not she, would not every one who knew, interpret any such action by him as a hypocritical attempt to do good that evil might result, to hit at her for rejecting him and at Clarke for winning her? With Bayard dead, would it not look even more as if he were taking revenge at a time when she was least able to protect herself?

Clare evidently saw the struggle that was going on and sat silently. She had come prepared to say more, but the turn of events had made silence the best course for her. Yet I could not see in her face any sign of weakening or of regret that she had done what she had done.

Kennedy seemed absorbed in contemplating the new aspects of the case which had been opened by what Miss Kendall had just revealed.

There were so many ways for misinterpretation open for Haxworth. He had so much to lose and so little to gain that for the moment we were all silent.

His measured step up and down the library had brought him close to us. He read on our faces that we had fathomed his secret and were looking to him for the decision.

With a quick, deliberate gesture he flung the nickel plate which he had been holding in his clenched hand down on his desk. The square jaws of the Haxworth in him snapped shut.

"Go ahead with it," he ground out with a grim smile. "You are doing great work."

Chapter X

The Detectascope

"HAXWORTH is a trump," remarked Kennedy as we three left the library. "There are not many men who would have done that in his position."

"I'm sorry that it turned out as it did," said Miss Kendall, "but I had to tell him, and I never dreamed that he still cared for Dorothy Padgett—though it would have been my duty to tell him just the same if I had known."

"What do you think we ought to do?" asked Kennedy, pausing on the corner.

"Nothing that will interfere with the main issue just at present—the discovery of Phyllis Royce. May I make a confession?" she asked, turning to Kennedy.

"I hope it is not a serious offense." He smiled lightly.

"It is not an intentional one, I assure you. But I feel that I must be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Kennedy. I intended to tell it to Mr. Haxworth, but I could not bring myself to say it after I found out how he felt about the matter, and, besides, I had told him enough to satisfy my conscience."

"You—er—mean that you have already seen Miss Padgett and——"

"Exactly. I saw her a few days ago when I heard the facts first. She told me she didn't believe it. Then I offered to prove it to her and she said that she had every confidence in her agents. I insisted. She declined to be bothered about it. In fact her attitude was about that which I described. I don't think she cares, or that she feels any social responsibility. It is not immoral; it is just unmoral."

"Then, of course, she couldn't understand how Haxworth could be interested in that sort of thing."

"No; rather she excuses men for being interested—the other way."

"And of course Clarke thinks Haxworth a plain ordinary fool."

"I suppose so. I know how she feels, though. You see, that was how I came to know her and why I sought to keep in the background at the Futurist, lest she should see me and suspect I was watching her. If I had known what I do now I should have been even more careful."

"You said you had a plan, or at least implied as much," prompted Craig.

"I can't tell you how relieved I feel," she insisted. "I was afraid that you'd think I was 'butting in.' But it all happened several days ago. I was only waiting to clear up a few points in my own mind before telling you and Mr. Haxworth. Now I am glad that it is over, and I trust that no harm was done. Yes, I have a plan—or half a plan. Don't you think it would be just the thing, under the circumstances, to ring up District Attorney Carton, tell him what we have accomplished and take him into our confidence? Perhaps he can suggest something. At any rate we have all

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got to work together, for there is going to be a great fight when they find out how far we have gone."

"Bully idea," agreed Craig, as we paused before a telephone pay station.

Twenty minutes later we were seated in the District Attorney's office in the Criminal Courts Building, pouring into his sympathetic ear the story of our progress so far.

Carton seemed to be delighted, as Kennedy proceeded to outline the case, at the fact that he and Miss Kendall had found it possible to coöperate. His own experience in trying to get others to work with the District Attorney's Office, particularly the police, had been quite the reverse.

"I wish to heaven you could get the right kind of evidence against the Montmartre gang," he sighed. "It is a gang, too—a high-class gang. In fact—well, it must be done. That place is a blot on the city. The police never have really tried to get anything on it. Miss Kendall and Haxworth never could, could you? I admit I never have. It seems to be understood that it is practically impossible to prove anything against it. They openly defy us. The thing can't go on. It demoralizes all our other work. Just one good blow at the Montmartre and we could drive every one of these vile crooks to cover."

HE BROUGHT his fist down with a thud on the desk, swung around in his chair and emphasized his words with his forefinger.

"And yet, I know as well as I know that you are all in this room that graft is being paid to the police and the politicians by that place and in fact by all those places along there, which you say belong to this Padgett estate. If we are to do anything with them, that must be proved. That is the first step and I'm glad the whole thing hinges on the Royce case. People always sit up and take notice when there is something personal involved, some human interest which even the newspapers can see. That Montmartre crowd, whoever they are, must be made to feel the strong arm of the law. That's what I am in this office to do. Now, Kennedy, there must be some way to catch those crooks with the goods."

"They aren't ordinary crooks, you know," ruminated Kennedy.

"I know they are not. But you and Miss Kendall and Jameson ought to be able to think out a scheme."

"But you see, Mr. Carton," put in Clare, "this is a brand new situation. Your gambling and vice and graft exposures have made all of them so wary that they won't pass a bill from their right to their left pockets for fear it is marked."

Carton laughed.

"Well, you are a brand new combination against them. Let me see; you want suggestions. Why don't you use the detectaphone?"

Kennedy shook his head.

"The detectaphone is all right, as we found out in the gambling and gunmen cases. It might work again. But I don't think I'll take any chances. No, these grafters wouldn't say 'Thank you' in an open boat in midocean, for fear of wireless, now. They've been educated up to a lot of things lately. No, it must be something new. What do you know about graft up there?"

"The people who are running those places in the fifties are making barrels of money," summarized Carton quickly. "No one ever interferes with them, either. I know from reliable sources, too, that the police are 'getting theirs.' But although I know it I can't prove it; I can't even tell who is getting it. But once a week a collector for the police calls around in that district and shakes them all down. By Jove, to-day is the day. The trouble with it all is that they have made the thing so underground that no one but the principals know anything about it—not even the agents. I guess you are right about the detectaphone."

"To-day's the day, is it?" mused Craig.

"So I understand."

"I think I can get them with a new machine they never even dreamed of," exclaimed Kennedy, who had been turning something over in his mind.

HE REACHED for the telephone and called the Montmartre.

"Julius, please," he said when they answered; then, placing his hand over the transmitter, he turned to Claire. "That was your friend the Titian, Miss Kendall."

"No friend of mine if she happens to remember seeing me in Dr. Harris's office the other day. Still, I doubt if she would."

"Hello—Julius? Good morning. How

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about a private dining-room for three, Julius?"

We could not hear the reply, but Craig added quickly, "I thought there were two?"

Evidently the answer was in the affirmative, for Craig asked next, "Well, can't we have the small one?"

He hung up the receiver with a satisfied smile after closing with "That's the way to talk. Thank you, Julius. Good-by."

"What was the difficulty?" I asked.

Craig appeared to be oblivious to the question.

"What was it?" I insisted.

He laughed. "I'm back to earth again now, Walter. Why, I thought I'd take a chance—and it took. Now figure it out for yourself. Carton says it's dough day, so to speak, up there. What is more natural than that the money for all those places owned by the Padgett estate and leased to various people should be passed over in a place that is public and yet is not public? For instance, there is the Montmartre itself. Now think it out. Where would that be done in the Montmartre? Why, in one of the private dining-rooms, of course."

"That seems reasonable," agreed Carton.

"That was the way I doped it," pursued Craig. "I thought I'd confirm it if I could. You remember they told us to call up always if I wanted a private dining-room and it would be reserved for me. So it was the most natural thing in the world for me to call up. If they had said yes, I should have been disappointed. But they said no, and straightway I wanted one of those rooms the worst way. One seems to be engaged—the large one. He said nothing about the other, so I asked him. Since I knew about it, he could hardly say no. Well, I have engaged it for lunch—an early luncheon, too."

"It sounds all right, as though you were on the right trail," remarked Carton. "But, remember, only the best sort of evidence will go against those people. They can afford to hire the best lawyers that money can retain. And be careful not to let them get anything on you, for they are fearful liars and they'll go the limit to discredit you."

"Trust us," assured Craig. "Now, Miss Kendall, if you will give us the pleasure of lunching with you at the Montmartre again, I think we may be able to get the Judge just the sort of open and shut evidence he is after."

"I shall be glad to do it. I'm ready now."

Kennedy glanced at his watch. "It's a little early yet. If we take a taxicab we shall have plenty of time to stop at the laboratory on our way."

Arriving at the laboratory, he went to a drawer, from which he took a little box which contained a long tube, and carefully placed it in the breast pocket of his coat. Then from a chest of tools he drew several steel sections that apparently fitted together, and began stuffing parts into various pockets.

"Here, Walter," he said, "these make me bulge like a yeggman with his outfit under his coat. Can't you help me with some of these parts?"

I jammed several into various pockets—heavy pieces of metal—and we were ready.

OUR previous visits to the Montmartre seemed to have given us the *entrée* and the precaution of telephoning made it even easier. Indeed, it appeared that about all that was necessary there was to be known and to be thought "right." We carefully avoided the office, where the stenographer might possibly have recognized Clare, and entered the elevator.

"Is Dr. Harris in?" asked Craig, both by way of getting information and showing that he was no stranger.

The black elevator boy gave an ivory grin. "No, sah. He done gone on one o' them things."

Another question developed the fact that whenever Harris was away it was generally assumed that he was tinting the metropolis vermilion from the Battery to the Bronx.

We passed down the hall to the smaller of the two dining-rooms, and as we went by the larger we could see the door open and that no one was there.

We had ordered and the waiter had scarcely shut the door before Kennedy was divesting himself of the heavy steel sections which he had hidden in his pockets. I did the same.

With a quick glance he seemed to be observing just how the furniture was placed. The smaller dining-room was quite as elaborately furnished as the larger, though of course the furniture was more crowded.

He moved a settee and was on his knees in a corner. "Let me see," he considered. "There was nothing on this side of the

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larger room except the divan in the center."

As nearly as he could judge he was measuring off just where the divan stood on the opposite side of the wall, and its height. Then he began fitting together the pieces of steel. As he added one to another, I saw that they made a sectional brace and bit of his own design, a long, vicious-looking affair such as a burglar might have been glad to own.

Carefully he started to bore through the plaster and lath back of the settee and to one side of where the divan must have been. He was making just as small a hole as possible, now and then stopping to listen.

There was no noise from the next room, but a tap on the door announced the waiter with luncheon. He shoved the settee back and joined us. The discreet waiter placed the food on the table and departed without a word or look. Kennedy resumed his work and we left the luncheon still untasted.

The bit seemed to have gone through as Kennedy, turning it carefully, withdrew it now and then to make sure. At last he seemed to be satisfied with the opening he had made.

From the package in his breast pocket he drew a long brass tube which looked as if it might be a putty-blower. Slowly he inserted it into the hole he had bored.

"What is it?" I asked, unable to restrain my curiosity longer.

"I felt sure that there would be no talking done in that room, especially as we are in this one and any one knows that even if you can't put a detectaphone in a room, it will often work if merely placed against a wall or door, on the other side, in the next room. So I thought I'd use this instead. Put your eye down here."

I did so and was amazed to find that through a hole less than a quarter of an inch in diameter the brass tube enabled me to see the entire room next to us.

I looked up at Kennedy in surprise. "What do you think of this, Miss Kendall?" I asked, moving the settee out of her way. "What do you call it?"

"That is a detectascope," he replied, "a little contrivance which makes use of the fish-eye lens."

"The fish-eye lens?"

"Yes. It is the idea of Gaillard Smith, adapter of the detectaphone. The detectascope enables you to see what is going on in another room. The focus may be altered in range so that the faces of those in the room may be recognized and the act of passing money or signing checks, for instance, may be detected. The instrument is fashioned somewhat after the cytoscope of the doctors, with which the human interior may be seen."

"Very remarkable," exclaimed Clare. "But I can't understand how it is possible to see so much through such a little tube. Why, I almost fancy I can see more in that room than I could with my own eyes if I were placed so that I could not move my head."

Kennedy laughed.

"That's the secret," he went on. "For instance, take a drop of water. Professor Wood of Johns Hopkins has demonstrated recently the remarkable refracting power of a drop of water, using the camera and the drop of water as a lens. It is especially interesting to scientists because it illustrates the range of vision of some fishes. They have eyes that see over half a circle. Hence the lens gets its name—the fish-eye lens.' A globe refracts the light that reaches it from all directions, and if it is placed as the lens is in the detectascope, so that one-half of it catches the light, all this light will be refracted through it. Ordinary lenses, because of their flatness, have a range of only a few degrees, the widest in use, I believe, taking in only ninety-six degrees, or a little over a quarter of a circle. So you see my detectascope has a range almost twice as wide as that of any other lens."

The little tube was fascinating, and although there was no one in the next room yet, I could not resist the desire to keep on looking through it.

"Since you are so interested, Walter," laughed Craig, "we'll appoint you to take the first shift at watching. Meanwhile we may as well eat since we shall certainly have to pay. When you are tired or hungry I'll take a turn."

CHAPTER XI

THE *PORTRAIT PARLÉ*

KENNEDY and I had been taking turns at watching through the detectascope while Miss Kendall told us more about the work and ideals of Haxworth and how she

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had come to be associated with the organization he had formed to clean up New York.

"We have struck some delicate situations before," she was saying, "times when it meant either that we must surrender and compromise the work of the investigation or offend an interest that might turn out to be more powerful than we realized. His rule from the start was, 'No Compromise.' You know the moment you compromise with one, all the others hear it and it weakens your position. So Mr. Haxworth has always cut the Gordian knot, just as you saw him do it this time. We've made some powerful enemies, but our idea is that as long as we keep perfectly straight and honest they will never be able to beat us. We shall win in the end, because so far it has never come to a show-down, when we appealed to the public itself, that the public had not risen and backed us strongly."

It was easy to see that Miss Kendall had the utmost respect for Haxworth. As for myself, I had come to have the utmost respect for her and her frank way of handling a ticklish most important subject without fear or prudishness.

There was a refreshing newness about her method. It was neither the holier-than-thou attitude of many religionists, nor the smug monopoly of all knowledge of the social worker, nor the brutal wantonness of the man or woman of the world who excuses everything "because it is human nature, always has been and always will be."

"We have no illusions on the subject," she pursued. "We don't expect to change human nature until the individual standard changes. But we are convinced of this—and it is as far as we go and is what we are out to accomplish—and that is that we can, and are going to, smash protected, commercialized vice as one of the big businesses of New York."

"Sh-h," cautioned Kennedy, whose turn it happened to be just then to watch. "Some one has just entered the room."

"Who is it?" I whispered eagerly.

"A man. I can't see his face. His back is toward me, but there is something familiar about him. There—he is turning around. For Heaven's sake—it's Ike the Dropper!"

We had already recounted to Miss Kendall our experiences in following Dr. Harris to the black and tan joint and the meeting with Ike the Dropper.

"Then Ike the Dropper is the collector for the police or the politicians higher up," she exclaimed under her breath. "If we learned nothing more, that would be enough. It would tell us whom to watch."

Hastily we took turns at getting a good look at Ike through the wonderful little detectascope. Then Kennedy resumed his watch, whispering now and then what he saw. Apparently Ike had proceeded to make himself comfortable in the luxurious surroundings of the private dining-room, against the arrival of the graft payers.

"I wonder who the man higher up is," whispered Miss Kendall.

"Some one is coming in," reported Kennedy. "By George, it is that stenographer from the office downstairs. She is handing him an envelope. Good for her! He tried to kiss her and she backed away in disgust. The scoundrel!

"Isn't it clever, though? Not a word is said by any one. I don't suppose she could swear to knowing anything about what is in the envelope. There she goes out. He is opening the envelope and counting out the money—ten one-hundred-dollar bills. There they go into the fob pocket of his trousers. I imagine he learned something from my pickpocket. That is the safest pocket a man has. That little contribution, I take it, was from the Montmartre itself."

Then followed an interval in which Ike puffed away on his cigar in silent state.

"Here's another now," announced Craig. "Another woman. I never saw her before."

Both Miss Kendall and I looked and neither of us recognized her. She was slim and would have been young-looking if she had not made such obvious efforts to imitate the healthy color of the cheeks which she probably would have had if she had lived sensibly and left cosmetics alone.

Kennedy was hastily jotting down some notes on the back of an envelope.

"They are going through the same proceedings again. I guess Ike doesn't like her. There she goes. Only two hundred this time."

Another wait followed, during which Ike smoked down his cigar and lighted another from the stub. Then the door opened again.

Kennedy motioned quickly to Clare to look through the detectascope. Meanwhile he pulled from his pocket the piece of paper he had written on and torn from the back of the menu at the Futurist.

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"MARIE!" exclaimed Clare under her breath.

"The same," whispered Kennedy. "Miss Kendall, you have the true 'camera eye' of the born detective. Now—please—let me see if I can get what occurs."

She yielded her place to him.

"Three hundred more," he murmured. "Marie must be in the game, though. He didn't wait for her to leave before he tore open the envelope. Now they are burning the envelopes in the ash tray. And still not a word. This is clever, clever. Think of it—fifteen hundred dollars of easy money like that! I wonder how much of it sticks to Ike's hands on the way up. He must have a capacious fob pocket for that. Say, he's a regular fellow with the ladies, Ike is. Only this one doesn't seem to resent it. By George, I wonder if this fellow Ike isn't giving the police or the politicians the double-cross. He couldn't be on such intimate terms with one who was paying graft to him as collector otherwise; do you think so?"

Craig looked up without waiting for an answer. "You will excuse any levity, but that was some kiss she just gave him."

Kennedy resumed his position for looking through the detectascope, occasionally glancing down at the notes he had made the day before and now and then making a slight alteration.

"There. She is going away now. Well, I guess the collection is all over. He has his hat on and a third cigar, ready to go as soon as somebody signals that the coast is clear. That was a good day's work for Ike and the man higher up, whoever he is. Ah—there he goes. It was a signal from the waiter he was after. Now we may as well finish this luncheon. It costs enough."

For several minutes we ate in silence.

"I wish I could have followed Ike," observed Craig. "But of course it would have been of no use. To go out right after him would have given the whole thing away."

"Who is that dark-haired, dark-skinned woman, Marie, do you suppose?" asked Clare. "Sometimes I almost think she is part negro."

"I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised, though, if you were right. If you have any investigators to spare, they might try to find out who she is and something of her history. I will give them a copy of these notes which I intend to turn over to the Department of Justice men who have been making the white slave investigation for the Federal Government."

Kennedy had laid the notes which he had made on the menu before us and was copying them. Both Clare and I leaned over to read them. It was Greek to me:

Nose — straight, base elevated, nostrils thick, slightly flaring.
Ears—lobe descending oval, traversed by a hollow, antitragus concave; lobe separated from cheek.
Lips—large.
Mouth—large.
Chin—receding.

There was much more that he had jotted down and added to the description.

"OH," EXCLAIMED Clare, as she ran through the writing, "that is this new *portrait parlé*, the spoken picture, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Kennedy. "You may know that the Government has been using it in its white slave inquiry and has several thousands of such descriptions. Under the circumstances, I understand the Government agents find it superior to finger prints. Finger prints are all right for identification, as we have found right here, for instance, in the Night Court. But Bertillon's new *portrait parlé* is the thing for apprehension."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Well, take the case before us. We have had no chance to finger print that woman and what good would it do if we had? No one could recognize her that way until she was arrested or some means had been taken to get the prints again.

"But the *portrait parlé* is scientific apprehension, the step that comes before scientific identification by finger-prints. It means giving the detective an actual portrait of the person he is sent after without burdening him with a photograph. As descriptions are now given, together with a photograph, a person is described as of such a weight, height, general appearance, and so on. A clever crook knows that. He knows how to change his appearance so that there are few even of the best detectives who can recognize him. This new system describes the features so that a man can carry them in his mind systematically, features that can not be changed.

"Take the nose, for example," explained Kennedy. "There are only three kinds, as

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Bertillon calls them—convex, straight, and concave. A detective, we will say, is sent out after a man with a concave nose or, as in this case a woman with a straight nose. Thus he is freed from the necessity of taking a second glance at two-thirds of the women, roughly, that he meets—that is, theoretically. He passes by all with convex and concave noses.

"There are four classes of ears—triangular, square, oval and round, as they may be called. Having narrowed his search to women with straight noses, the detective needs to concern himself with only one-fourth of the women with straight noses. Having come down to women with straight noses and, say, oval ears, he will eliminate all those that do not have the mouth, lips, chin, eyes, forehead, and so on that have been given him. Besides that, there are other striking differences in noses and ears that make his work much easier than you would imagine, once he has been trained to observe such things quickly."

"It sounds all right," I agreed haltingly.

"It is all right, too," he argued warmly. "The proof of it is its use in Paris and other cities abroad and the fact that it has been imported here in New York in the Police Department and has been used by the Government. I could tell you many interesting stories about how it has succeeded where photographs would have failed."

I had been reading over the description again and trying to apply it when suddenly I remembered the random remarks of Downes, the clerk in Bayard's office.

"SAY," I exclaimed, "do you remember that description which Downes gave us of the woman who had been calling on Bayard? As I remember it, some of the points correspond with what you have set down here for Marie."

"I had thought of that," replied Kennedy. "You remember he was very hazy. Oh, I wish I had a scientific description of her. There was just enough to it to suggest what you have thought of. I believe that you are right, too. But belief isn't proof. For instance, I believe also that Miss Kendall is right and that the woman is a mulatto, but that is a long way from proving it. Still, I hope that by using the *portrait parlé* and other things we may be able to draw the loose threads together into a net that will catch her—providing, of course, that she should be caught."

He had finished making copies of the *portrait parlé* and had called for a check for the lunch.

"So you see," he concluded, "this is without any doubt the woman we saw at the Futurist, whom Miss Kendall followed to Madame Margot's Beauty Shop, two doors down, and presumably she is the woman whom Downes meant in his meager description."

Kennedy handed a copy to Miss Kendall.

"Using that and whatever other means you may have, Miss Kendall," he said, "I wish that you would try to find this woman and all you can about her. Walter, take this other copy and see Carton. I think he has a county detective who knows the system. I shall spend the rest of the day getting in touch with the Federal authorities in this city and in Washington trying to find out whether they know anything about her."

We left the Montmartre with as much care as we had entered and seemingly without having yet aroused any suspicion. The rest of the day was spent in setting to work those whom we felt we could trust to use the *portrait parlé* to locate the mysterious dark-haired Marie who seemed to cross our trail at every turn, yet who proved so elusive.

CHAPTER XII

THE BEAUTY PARLOR

"IT SEEMS strange," remarked Kennedy the following morning when we had met in his laboratory for our daily conference to plan our campaign, "that although we seem to be on the right trail we have not a word yet about Phyllis Royce herself. Carton has just telephoned that her mother, poor woman, is worrying her heart out and is a mere shadow of her former self."

"We must get some word," asserted Miss Kendall. "This silence is almost like the silence of death."

"I'm afraid I shall have to impose on you that task," said Kennedy thoughtfully to her. "There seems to be no course open to us but to transfer our watch from Dr. Harris to this Marie. Of course it is too early to hear from our search by means of

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the *portrait parlé*. But we have both seen Dr. Harris and Marie enter the beauty parlor of Madame Margot. Now, I don't mean to cast aspersions on your own good looks, Miss Kendall. They are of the sort with which no beauty parlor except Nature can compete."

A girl of another type than Clare would probably have read a half dozen meanings into his sincere compliment. But then, I reflected that a man of another type than Craig could not have made the remark without expecting her to do so. There was a frankness between them which, I must confess, considerably relieved me. I was not prepared to lose Kennedy, even to Miss Kendall.

She smiled. "You want me to try a course in artificial beautification, don't you?"

"Yes. Walter doesn't need it, and as for me, nothing could make me a modern Adonis. Seriously, though, a man couldn't get in there, I suppose. At least that is one of the many things I want you to find out. Under the circumstances, you are the only person in whom I have confidence enough to believe that she can get at the facts there. Find out all you can about the character of the place and the people who frequent it. And if you can learn anything about that Madame Margot who runs the place, so much the better."

"I'll try," she said simply.

Kennedy resumed his tests of the yellow powder in the tubes which Dr. Harris had been distributing, and I endeavored to make myself as little in the way as possible.

Perhaps a quarter of an hour after Miss Kendall left, a large touring car pulled up before the laboratory, and a moment later Haxworth entered.

"Good morning. Where is Miss Kendall?" he asked.

"Making an investigation of a beauty shop up by the Montmartre," replied Kennedy, shaking hands. "Is there anything I can do?"

"I wanted to see her. But I can tell you just as well," replied Haxworth, with some reserve, however, I fancied.

He sat down and gazed curiously about at Kennedy's apparatus for scientific detection of crime. It seemed to impress him favorably, for after a few minutes he resumed. "It is about Miss Padgett."

"Yes," prompted Kennedy in a manner that showed that he understood and appreciated Haxworth's delicate position.

"I don't like her friends," blurted out Haxworth. "Of course, I suppose it is none of my business. But I have known her since she was a little girl. I won't say anything about—er—Clarke. That is not for me to say. But two or three times lately I have seen her with a Mrs. Temple. I see you know her. Well, what do you think? She isn't just the kind of woman a girl like Dorothy ought to be intimate with, is she?"

Kennedy said nothing about the times when or circumstances under which we had seen Mrs. Temple, but merely agreed, "N-no, perhaps not."

"I don't mean to say that I have ever seen anything openly wrong as far as Mrs. Temple is concerned. But I just don't like the idea. You have already told me what I came to find out.

"The mere fact that you don't say anything, out of consideration either for Dorothy or myself, tells me that it is—unfortunate that she should have such a friend."

"I think the friendship is on Mrs. Temple's part, if at all; not on the part of Miss Padgett," hastened Kennedy.

"Of course," said Haxworth. "But that is what worries me. I hate to think of her under the influence of a woman who is traveling the road of Mrs. Temple. I—I wish you'd bear it in mind and tell Miss Kendall. I don't want to set myself up as a censor, but—I don't like it—that's all."

Haxworth was so sincere and his feelings did him so much credit that it was impossible not to sympathize with his disinterestedness.

"I shall keep an eye on Mrs. Temple," said Kennedy. "If there is anything I can do to counteract her influence—that is if there is any influence to counteract—you can depend on it that both Miss Kendall and I shall be only too happy to do so."

"That's it," brightened Haxworth. "I'm afraid that such a woman may defeat our best efforts in educating the Padgett estate up to the responsibilities which now it does not seem to feel. Thank you."

Haxworth lingered a few minutes to find out how the case was going, then sped on his way downtown to his office.

Kennedy continued his work.

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IT WAS not until the close of the afternoon that a taxicab drove up and deposited Miss Kendall at the door of our apartment.

"What luck?" greeted Kennedy eagerly, as she entered. "Do you feel thoroughly beautified?"

"Don't make me smile," she replied, as she swept in with an air that would have done credit to the star in a comic opera. "I'd hate to crack or even crease the enamel on my face. I've been steamed and frozen, beaten and painted and——"

"I'm sorry to have been the cause of such cruel and unusual punishment," apologized Craig.

"No, indeed. Why, I enjoyed it. Let me tell you about the place."

She leaned against the laboratory table, certainly an incongruous picture in her new rôle as contrasted with the stained and dirty background of paraphernalia of medico-legal investigation. I could not help feeling that if Clare Kendall ever had decided to go in for such things, Marie herself would have had to look sharp for her laurels.

"As you enter the place," she began, "you feel a delightful warmth and there is an odor of attar of roses in the air. There are thick half-inch carpets that make walking a pleasure and dreamy Sleepy Hollow rockers that make it an impossibility. It is all very fascinating.

"There are dull-green lattices, little gateways with roses, white enamel with cute little diamond panes of glass for windows, inviting bowers of artificial flowers and dim yellow lights. It makes you feel like a sybarite just to see it. It's a cosmetic Arcadia for that fundamental feminine longing for beauty.

"Well, first there are the little dressing-rooms, each with a bed, a dresser and mirror, and everything in such good taste. After you leave them you go to a white, steamy room and there they bake you. It's a long process of gentle showers, hot and cold, after that, and massage.

"I thought I was through. But it seems that I had only just started. There was a battery of white manicure tables, and then the hairdressers and the artists who lay on these complexions—what do you think of mine? I can't begin to tell all the secrets of the curls and puffs, and reënforcements, hygienic rolls, transformators, fluffy puffers and all that, or of the complexions. Why, you can choose a complexion, like wall-paper or upholstery. They can make you as pale as a sickly heroine or they can make you as yellow as a bathing girl. There is nothing they can't do. I asked just for fun. I could have come out as dusky as a gipsy.

"They tried electrolysis on my eyebrows, and one attendant suggested a hypodermic injection of perfume. Ever hear of that? She thought 'new mown hay' was the best to saturate the skin with. Then another suggested, as long as I had chosen this moonbeam make-up, that perhaps I'd like a couple of dimples. They could make them permanent or lasting only a few hours. I declined. But there is nothing so wild that they haven't either thought of themselves or imported from Paris or somewhere else. I heard them discussing some one who wanted odd eyes—made by pouring in certain liquids. They don't seem to care how they affect sight, hearing, skin or health. It is decoration run mad."

"How about the people there?" asked Kennedy.

"Oh, I must tell you about that. There's so much to tell, I hardly know where to begin—or stop. I saw Mrs. Temple."

"You did?" interposed Kennedy, repeating what Haxworth had told us on his hasty visit.

"Yes. They all seem to know her. I don't think she's as bad as some people imagine, though. To tell the truth they are using her, I believe. You know one customer like that attracts her friends and so on. There is every class there from the demi-monde up to actresses and really truly society. And they have things for all prices from the comparatively cheap to the most extravagant. They're very accommodating and, in a way, democratic."

"Did it seem—straight?" asked Kennedy.

"On the surface, yes, as far as I could judge. But I'll have to go back again for that. For instance, there was one thing that seemed queer to me. I had finished the steaming and freezing and was resting. A maid brought a tray of cigarettes, those dainty little thin ones with gilt tips. There seemed to be several kinds. I managed to try some of them. One at least I know was doped, although I only had a whiff of it. I think after they got to know you they'd serve anything from a cocktail in a teacup to the latest fads. I am sure that I

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saw Mrs. Temple taking some veronal in her coffee."

"Veronal?" commented Craig. "Then that may be where Dr. Harris comes in."

"Partly, I think. Mrs. Temple went out of the lounging-room and didn't come back while I was there. I've got to find out more about what is hidden there. Once I heard a man's voice and I know it was Dr. Harris."

"HARRIS! Why, the elevator boy at the Montmartre said he was painting the town," I observed.

"I don't believe it. I think he has all he can do keeping up with the beauty shop. You see, it is more than a massage parlor. They do real decorative surgery, as it is called. They'll engage to give you a new skin as soft and pink as a baby's. Or they will straighten a nose, or turn an ear. They have light treatment for complexions—the ruby ray, the violet ray, the phosphorescent ray.

"Professor Kennedy would laugh at the fake science that is being handed out to those gullible fools. They can get rid of freckles and superfluous hair, of course. But they'll even tell you that they can change your mouth and chin, your eyes, your cheeks. I should be positively afraid of some of their electrical appliances there. They sweat down your figure or build it up—just as you please.

"Oh, no one need be plain in these days, not as long as Madame Margot's exists. That is where I think Dr. Harris comes in. He can pose as a full-fledged, blown-in-the-bottle cosmetic surgeon. I'll bet there is no limit to the agonized beautification that they can put you through if they think they can play you for a sucker."

"By the way, did you see Madame Margot herself?" asked Craig.

"No. I made all sorts of discreet inquiries after her, but they seemed to know nothing. The nearest I could get was a hint from one of the girls that she was away. But I'll tell you whom I think I heard, talking to the man whose voice sounded like Dr. Harris, and that was Marie. Of course I couldn't see, but in the part of the shop that looks like a fake hospital I heard two voices and I would wager that Marie is going through some of this beautification herself. Of course she is. You remember how artificial she looked?"

"Did you see any one else besides Mrs. Temple?"

"Oh, yes. You know the place is two doors from the Montmartre. Well, I think they have some connection with that place between them and the Montmartre. Anyhow it looks as if they did, for after I had been there a little while a girl came in, apparently from nowhere. She was the girl we saw paying money to Ike the Dropper, you remember—the one none of us recognized? There's something in that next house and she seems to have charge of it."

"Well, you have done a good day's work," complimented Kennedy.

"I feel that I have made a start, anyhow," she admitted. "There is a lot yet to be learned of Margot's. You remember it was early in the day that I was there. I want to go back some time in the afternoon or evening."

"Dr. Harris is apparently the oracle on beauty," mused Kennedy.

"Yes. He must make a lot of money there."

"They must have some graft, though, besides the beauty parlor," went on Kennedy. "They wouldn't be giving up money to Ike the Dropper if that was all there was."

"No, and that is where the doped cigarette comes in. That is why I want to go again. I imagine it's like the Montmartre. They have to know you and think you are all right before you get the real inside of the place."

"I don't doubt it."

"I can't go around looking like a chorus girl," remarked Miss Kendall finally, with a glance at a little mirror she carried in her bag. "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me until I get rid of this beautification."

THE telephone rang sharply.

As Kennedy answered, we gathered that it was Carton. A few minutes of conversation, mostly on Carton's part, followed. Kennedy hung up the receiver with an exclamation of vexation.

"I'm afraid I did wrong to start anything with the *portrait parlé* yet," he said. "Why, this thing we are investigating has so many queer turns that you hardly know whom to trust."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know who could have given the thing away, but Carton says it wasn't an hour after the inquiries began about Marie

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that it became known in the underworld that she was being looked for in this way. Oh, they are clever, those grafters. They have all sorts of ways of keeping in touch. I suppose they remember they had one experience with the *portrait parlé* and it has made them as wary as a burglar is over finger prints. Carton tells me that Marie has disappeared."

"I could swear I heard her or some one at Margot's," said Clare.

"And Harris has disappeared. Of course you thought you overheard him, too. But you may have been mistaken."

"Why?"

"As nearly as Carton can find out," said Kennedy quickly, "Marie is Madame Margot herself."

CHAPTER XIII

THE DOPE JOINT

"I WANT to go to Margot's again today," volunteered Miss Kendall the following morning, adding with a smile, "You see, I've got the habit. Really, though, there is a mystery about that place that fascinates me. I want to find out more about this Marie, or Margot, or whoever it was that I thought I heard there. And then those doped cigarettes interest me. You see, I haven't forgotten what you said about dope the first time we talked about Dr. Harris. They will be more free with me, too, now that I am no longer a stranger."

"That is a good idea," agreed Kennedy who was now chafing under the enforced inaction of the case. "I hope that this time they will let you into some of the secrets. There is one thing, though, I wish you'd look out for especially."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I should like to know what ways there are of communicating with the outside. You realize, of course, that it is very easy for them, if they come to suspect you, to frame up something in a place like that. There are strong-arm women as well as men, and I'm not at all sure that there may not be some men besides Dr. Harris who are acquainted with that place. At any rate Dr. Harris is unscrupulous enough himself."

"I shall make it a point to observe that," she said as she left us. "I hope I'll have something to tell you when I come back."

"Walter," remarked Craig as the door closed, "that is one of the gamest girls I ever knew."

I looked across at him inquiringly.

"Don't worry, my boy," he added, reading my expression. "She's not of the marrying kind, any more than I am."

I was about to say that I was not so sure of anything or anybody where a woman was concerned when the door opened hastily. I had half expected it was Clare returning. To our surprise, I found that it was Dorothy Padgett.

"Is this Professor Kennedy?" she asked, pausing and looking from one of us to the other and then at the apparatus.

She handed him her card almost before Craig could reply. "I am Miss Dorothy Padgett," she said. "I understand that you have been employed by District Attorney Carton to harass the tenants of some of the properties of my estate. Now, I came to say that I think it is an entirely unwarrantable proceeding. My agents are Bayard & Co., and they are perfectly competent to take care of my estate in spite of Mr. Bayard's unfortunate death. A number of my friends, among them Mr. Clarke, to whom I am engaged, tell me it is positively scandalous for you people to single out this estate for persecution."

"We are not persecuting you, Miss Padgett," remarked Kennedy. "In the first place, we started to find Phyllis Royce, who seems to have mysteriously disappeared. Let me explain to you how——"

"I don't want any explanations," she interrupted. "I am not interested in explanations."

She was apparently very much bothered by something, which at last came to the surface. "Several days ago a Miss Kendall came to see me. She was positively insulting. Since then I have learned that she is working for Mr. Haxworth, who has some scheme by which he is going to make saints out of everybody, I believe. I didn't know Miss Kendall; I don't know whether what she said is true or not; but I can't see what business it is of hers—or of yours, either, even if it is so. If there is a violation of the law, then we can stop it ourselves. If there is not, then there is no reason for anyone to interfere. Some of the tenants are complaining. I hate business, but I thought under the circumstances perhaps I could reason with you better than an agent."

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I thought I detected the hand of an agent in that last sentence, or perhaps of Clarke himself, whom she had mentioned. It must have put Clarke into a rather uncomfortable position, I imagined, to have the investigation of the Montmartre going on. He naturally could not wish to come out in defense of it too strongly. That might show up his past connection. Then, too, if he did not combat it, it might appear also. No doubt he felt between the devil and the deep sea in the matter. Dorothy might be liberal in her views, but there was no use in testing that liberality. Undoubtedly she had spoken to him about the matter and he had said that the whole thing was an outrage. While the iron was hot she had decided to strike a blow.

"Miss Padgett," said Kennedy, facing her seriously, "you have spoken of Miss Kendall. I am sure that she explained the situation to you fully. Really, either because of what your friends say, or because you don't care, you are setting yourself against——"

"I am setting myself against no one," she interrupted again. "It's none of my business what our tenants do and I came here to tell you to tell Mr. Haxworth that I won't be harassed and hounded and made out to be a—a common person, all because I don't agree with him that nobody's business is my business."

There was evidently more of pique against Haxworth in it, after all, than I had suspected at first. She seemed to resent his interference more than anything else, seemed to be casting about for any argument or phrase that would justify her.

"If you would give me a chance, Miss Padgett," remonstrated Kennedy, "I could show you that it is precisely because it does affect you that Mr. Haxworth cares——"

"No," she cut in decisively. "I don't care to discuss Mr. Haxworth. He does not interest me."

It was evidently impossible to discuss the subject with her. She had not come to discuss it, but to relieve her own mind.

"Who sent you here?" asked Kennedy quickly without letting his temper show for a moment. "Miss Padgett, it is disappointing to hear from you opinions such as you express. They are not, they can not be your own. If you would only stop to consider——"

She seemed nonplussed for the moment at Kennedy's directness. But it was only for a moment. Before he could finish she turned and swept out of the room.

"I do not care to be insulted," she shot back angrily. "I came merely to give you and Mr. Haxworth warning that I have friends, and powerful friends, and that I am not a defenseless woman who can be bullied by district attorneys and detectives. Good-by."

She was gone as suddenly as she had appeared.

"WHO was back of that onslaught?" I asked.

"It would be difficult to say," replied Kennedy thoughtfully. "But I will say that I feel a great deal of sympathy for Dorothy Padgett. Her sins are sins of omission, due to her training and the social set she is associated with. As for Haxworth, my respect for him is such that I think it is positively shameful that any one can misunderstand him, least of all this girl whose battle he really is fighting."

The morning passed and half of the afternoon without any word from Miss Kendall. Kennedy was plainly becoming uneasy, when a hurried footstep in the hall was followed by a more hurried opening of the door.

"Let me sit down, just a minute, to collect myself," panted Miss Kendall, pressing her hands to her temples where the blue veins stood out and literally throbbed. "I'm all in."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Kennedy, placing a chair and switching on an electric fan, while he quickly found a bottle of restorative salts which was always handy in the laboratory.

"Oh—such a time as I've had! Wait—let me see whether I can recollect it in order."

A few minutes later she resumed. "I went in, as before. There seemed to be quite a change in the way they treated me. I must have made a good impression the first time. A second visit seemed to have opened the way for everything. Evidently they think I am all right.

"Well, I went through much the same thing as I did before, only I tried to make it not quite so elaborate, down to the point where several of us were sitting in loose robes in the lounging-room. That was the part, you know, that interested me before.

"The maid came in with the cigarettes

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and I smoked one of the doped ones. They watch everything that you do so closely there, and the moment I smoked one they offered me another. I don't know what was in them, but I fancy there must be just a trace of opium. They made me feel exhilarated, then just a bit drowsy. I managed to make away with the second without inhaling much of the smoke, for my head was in a whirl by this time. It wasn't so much that I was afraid I couldn't take care of myself as it was that I was afraid that it would blunt the keenness of my observation and I might miss something."

"Besides the cigarettes, was there anything else?" asked Craig.

"Yes, indeed. I didn't see any one there I recognized, but I heard some of them talk. One was taking a little veronal; another said something about heroin. It was high-toned hitting the pipe, if you may call it that—a Turkish bath, followed by massage, and then a safe complement of anything you wanted, taken leisurely by these aristocratic dope fiends.

"There was one woman there who I am sure was snuffing cocain. She had a little gold and enameled box like a snuff box beside her from which she would take from time to time a pinch of some white crystals and inhale it vigorously, now and then taking a little sip of a liqueur that was brought in to her."

"That's the way," observed Kennedy. "There are always a considerable number of inhuman beings who are willing to make capital out of the weaknesses of others. This illicit sale of cocain is one example. Such conditions have existed with the opium products a long time. Now it seems to be the 'coke fiend.' "

"I was glad I did just as I did," resumed Clare, "because it wasn't long before I saw that the thing to do was to feign drowsiness. A maid came over to me and in a most plausible and insinuating way hinted that perhaps I might feel like resting and that if the noise in the beauty parlor annoyed me, they had the entire next house—the one next to the Montmartre, you know—which had been fitted up as a dormitory."

"You didn't go?" cut in Craig immediately.

"I did not. I pleaded an engagement. Why, the place is a regular dope joint."

"Exactly. I suspected as much as you went along. Everything seems to have moved uptown lately, to have been veneered over to meet the fastidious second decade of the twentieth century. But underneath it all are the same old vices. I'm glad you didn't attempt to go into the next house. Anyhow, now we are certain about the character of the place. Did you notice anything about the means of communicating with the outside—the telephones, for instance?"

Miss Kendall was evidently feeling much better now.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "I took particular care to observe that. They have a telephone, but there is a girl who attends to it, although they don't really need one. She listens to everything. Then, too, in the other house—— You remember I spoke about the girl whom we saw paying Ike the Dropper? It seems that she has a similar position at the telephone over there."

"So they have two telephones," repeated Craig.

"Yes."

"Good. There are always likely to be some desperate characters in places like that. If we ever have any one go into that dope joint we must have some way of keeping in touch and protecting the person."

Miss Kendall had gone home for a few hours of rest after her exciting experience. Craig was idly tapping with his fingers on the arm of his chair.

Suddenly he jumped up. "I'm going up there to look that joint over from the outside," he announced.

WE WALKED past the front of it without seeing anything in particular, then turned the corner and were on the Avenue. Kennedy paused and looked at a cheap apartment house on which was a sign, "Flats to Let."

"I think I'll get the janitor to show me one of them," he said.

One was on the first floor in the rear. Kennedy did not seem to be very much interested in the rent. A glance out of the window sufficed to show him that he could see the back of the Montmartre and some of the houses. It took only a minute to hire it, at least conditionally, and a bill to the janitor gave us a key.

"I'll bet it is owned by the Padgett estate," he chuckled as we surveyed the unfurnished rooms which were now ours, at least until we could exercise an "option."

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"What are you going to do?"

"Use their own property against them," he answered. "We can't do anything just yet, but it will be dark by the time I get over to the laboratory and back and then we can do something."

That night we started prowling over the back fences down the street. Fortunately it was a very black night and Craig was careful not to use even the electric bull's eye which he had brought over from the laboratory together with some wire and telephone instruments.

As we crouched in the shadow of one of the fences, he remarked: "Just as I expected; the telephone wires run along the tops of the fences. Here's where they run into 72—that's the beauty parlor. These run into 70—that's the dope joint. Then next comes the Montmartre itself, reaching all the way back as far as the lot extends."

We had come up close to the backs of the houses by this time. The shades were all drawn and the blinds were closed in both of them, so that we had really nothing to fear provided we kept quiet. Besides the back yards looked unkempt, as if no one cared much about them.

Kennedy flashed the electric bull's eye momentarily on the wires. They branched off from the back fence down the party fence to the houses, both sets on one fence.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "It is better than I had hoped. The two sets go on up to the first floor together, then separate. One set goes into the beauty parlor; the other into the dope joint."

Craig had quietly climbed up on a shed over the basements of both the houses. He was working quickly with all the dexterity of a lineman. To two of the four wires he had attached one other. Then to two others he attached another, all the connections being made at exactly corresponding points.

The next step was to lead these two newly connected wires to a window on the first floor of the house next to the Montmartre. He fastened them lightly to the closed shutter, let himself down to the yard again and we beat a slow and careful retreat to our flat.

In one of the yards down near the corner, however, he paused. Here was an iron box fastened to one of the fences, a switch box or something of the sort belonging to the telephone company. To it were led all the wires from the various houses on the block and to each wire was fastened a little ticket on which was scrawled in indelible pencil the number of the house to which the wire ran.

Kennedy found the two pairs that ran to 70 and 72, cut in on them in the same way as he had done before and fastened two other wires, one to each pair. This pair he led along and into the flat.

"I've fixed it," he explained, "so that any one who can get into that room on the back of the first floor of the dope joint can communicate with the outside very easily over the telephone, without being overheard, either."

"How?" I asked completely mystified by the apparent simplicity of the proceeding.

"I have left two wires sticking on the outside shutter of that room," he replied. "All that any one who gets into that room has to do is to open the window softly, reach out and secure them. With them fastened to a transmitter which I have, he can talk to me in the flat around the corner and no one will ever know it."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FANTOM CIRCUIT

"THE question is, whom are we going to get whom we can trust to go to that dope joint and explore it?" remarked Kennedy, after we had finished telling Miss Kendall about our experiences of the night before.

"Carton must have some one who can take a course in beauty and dope," I replied. "Or perhaps Miss Kendall has one of her investigators whom she can trust."

"If the thing gets too rough," added Craig, "whoever is in there can telephone to us, if she will only be careful first to get that back room in the 'dormitory,' as they call it. Then all we'll have to do will be to jump in there and——"

"I'll do it," interrupted Clare.

"No, Miss Kendall," denied Kennedy firmly.

"Let me do it. There is no one whom I can trust more than myself. Besides, I know the places now."

She said it with an air of quiet determination, as if she had been thinking it over ever since she returned from her visit of the day before.

Kennedy and Miss Kendall faced each other for a moment. It was evident that it

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was against just this that he had been trying to provide. On her part it was equally evident that she had made up her mind.

"Miss Kendall," said Kennedy, meeting her calm eye, "you are the most nervy detective, barring none, that it has ever been my pleasure to meet. I yield under protest."

I must say that it was with a great deal of misgiving that I saw Clare enter Margot's. We had gone as far as the corner with her, had watched her go in, and then hurried into the unfurnished apartment which Craig had rented on the Avenue.

As we sat on the rickety chairs which we had borrowed from the janitor under pretense of wanting to reach something, the minutes that passed seemed like hours.

I wondered what had happened to the plucky girl in her devotion to the cause in which she had enlisted, and several times I could see from the expression of Craig's face that he more and more regretted that he had given in to her and had allowed her to go, instead of adhering to his original plan. From what she had told us about the two places, I tried to imagine what she was doing, but each time I ended with an increased feeling of apprehension.

Kennedy sat grimly silent with the receiver of the telephone glued to his ear, straining his hearing to catch even the faintest sound.

At last his face brightened.

"She's there all right," he exclaimed to me. "Managed to make them think in the beauty parlor that she was a dope fiend and pretty far gone. Insisted that she must have the back room on the first floor because she was afraid of fire. She kept the door open so that she would not miss anything, but it was a long time before she got a chance to reach out of the window and get the wires and connect them with the instruments I gave her. But it's all right now.

"Yes, Miss Kendall, right here, listening to everything you get a chance to say. Only be careful. There is no use spoiling the game by trying to talk to me until you have all that you think you can obtain in the way of evidence. Don't let them think you have any means of communication with the outside or they'll go to any length to silence you. We'll be here all the time and the moment you think there is any danger, call us."

Kennedy seemed visibly relieved by the message.

"She says that she has found out a great deal already, but didn't dare take the time to tell it just yet," he explained. "By the way, Walter, while we are waiting, I wish you would go out and see whether there is a policeman on fixed post anywhere around here."

Five minutes later when I returned, having located the nearest peg post a long block away on Broadway, Kennedy raised a warning hand. She was telephoning again.

"She says that attendants come and go in her room so often that it's hard to get a chance to say anything, but she is sure that there is some one hidden there, perhaps Marie or Madame Margot, whoever she is, or it may even be Phyllis Royce. They watch very closely."

"But," I asked, almost in a whisper, as if some one over there might hear me, "isn't this a very dangerous proceeding, Craig? It seems to me you are taking long chances. Suppose one of the telephone girls in either house, whom she told us keep such sharp watch over the wires, should happen to be calling up or answering a call. She would hear some one else talking over the wire and it wouldn't be difficult for her to decide who it was. Then there'd be a row."

"Not a chance," smiled Kennedy. "No one except ourselves, not even Central, can hear a word of what is said over these connections I have made. This is what is called a fantom circuit.'

"A fantom circuit?" I repeated. "What kind of a weird thing is that?"

"It is possible to superimpose another circuit over the four telephone wires of two existing circuits, making a so-called fantom line," he explained, as we waited for the next message. "It seems fantastic at first, but it is really in accordance with the laws of electricity. You use each pair of wires as if it were one wire and do not interfere in the least with them, but are perfectly independent of both. The current for the third circuit enters the two wires of one of the first circuits, divides, reunites, so to speak at the other end, then returns through the wires of the second circuit, dividing and reuniting again, thus just balancing the two divisions of the current and not causing any effect on either of the two original circuits. Rather wonderful, isn't it?"

"I should say that it was," I marveled. "I am glad I see it actually working rather than have to believe it second hand."

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"It's all due to a special repeating coil of high efficiency absolutely balanced as to resistances, number of turns of wire, and so on which I have used——Yes—Miss Kendall—we are here. Now please don't let things go on too far. At the first sign of danger, call. We can get in all right. You have the evidence now that will hold in any court as far as closing up that joint goes, and I'll take a chance of breaking into—well, Hades, to get to you. Good-by.

"I guess it is Hades there," he resumed to me. "She just telephoned that one of the dope fiends upstairs—a man, so that you see they admit both men and women there, after all—had become violent and Harris had to be called to quiet him before he ran amuck. She said she was absolutely sure, this time at least, that it was Harris. As I was saying about this fantom circuit, it is used a good deal now. Sometimes they superimpose a telephone conversation over the proper arrangement of telegraph messages and *vice versa*.

"What's that?" cried Craig, suddenly breaking off. "They heard you talking that last time, and you have locked the door against them? They are battering it down? Move something heavy, if you can, up against it—the bureau, anything to brace it. We'll be there directly. Come on, Walter. There isn't time to get around Broadway for that fixed post cop. We must do it ourselves. Hurry."

CRAIG dashed breathlessly out on the street. I followed closely.

"Hurry," he panted. "Those people haven't any use for any one that they think will snitch on them."

As we turned the corner, we ran squarely into a sergeant slowly going his rounds with eyes conveniently closed to what he was paid not to see.

Kennedy stopped and grabbed his arm.

"There's a girl up here in seventy-two who is being mistreated," he cried. "Come. You must help us get her out."

"Aw, g'wan. Whatyer givin' us? Seventy-two? That's a residence."

"Say—look here. I've got your number. You'll be up on the most serious charges of your whole career if you don't act on the information I have. All of Ike the Dropper's money 'll go for attorney's fees and some one will land in Sing Sing. Now, come!"

WE HAD gained the steps of the house. Outside all was dark, blank and bare. There was every evidence of the most excessive outward order and decency—not a sign of the conflict that was raging within.

Before the policeman could pull the bell, which would have been a first warning of trouble to the inmates, Kennedy had jumped from the high stoop to a narrow balcony running along the front windows of the first story, had smashed the glass into splinters with a heavy object which he had carried concealed under his coat, and was engaged in a herculean effort to wrench apart some iron bars which had been carefully concealed behind the discreetly drawn shades.

As one yielded, he panted, "No use to try the door. The grill work inside guards that too well. There goes another."

Inside now we could hear cries that told us that the whole house was roused, that even the worst of the drug fiends had come at least partly to his senses and begun to realize his peril. From Margot's beauty parlor a couple of girls and a man staggered forth in a vain effort to seem to leave quietly.

"Close that place, too, officer," cried Kennedy to the now astounded policeman. "We'll attend to this house."

The sergeant slowly lumbered across in time to let two more couples escape. It was evident that he hated the job; indeed, would have arrested Kennedy in the old days before Carton had thrown such a scare into the grafters. But Kennedy's assurance had flabbergasted him and he obeyed.

Another bar yielded, and another. Together we squeezed in and found ourselves in a dark front parlor. There was nothing to distinguish it from any ordinary reception room in the blackness.

Hurried footsteps were heard as if several people were retreating into the next house. Down the hall we hastened to the back room.

A second we listened. All was silent. Was Clare safe? It looked ominous. Still the door, partly battered in, was closed.

"Miss Kendall!" called Craig bending down close to the door.

"Is it you, Professor Kennedy?" came back a faint voice from the other side.

"Yes. Are you all right?"

There was no answer, but she was evidently tugging at something which appeared to be a heavy piece of furniture

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braced against the door. At last the bolt was slipped back, and there in the doorway she swayed, half exhausted but safe.

"Yes, all right," murmured Clare, bracing herself against the chiffonier which she had moved away from the door, "just a little shaky from the drugs—but all right. Don't bother about me, now. I can take care of myself. I'll feel better in a minute. Upstairs—that is where I think that woman is. Please, please don't—I'm all right—truly. Upstairs."

Kennedy had taken her gently by the arm and she sank down in an easy chair.

"Please hurry," she implored. "You may be too late."

She had risen again in spite of us and was out in the lower hall. We could hear a footstep on the stairs.

"There she goes, the woman who has been hiding up there, Madame——"

Clare cut the words short.

A woman had hastily descended the steps, evidently seeing her opportunity to escape while we were in the back of the house. She had reached the street door, which now was open, and the flaming arc light in front of the house shone brightly on her.

I looked, expecting to see our dark-haired, olive-skinned Marie. I stared in amazement. Instead, this woman was fair, her hair was flaxen, her figure more slim, even her features were different. She was a stranger. I could not recollect ever having seen her.

Again I strained my eyes, thinking it might be Phyllis Royce at last, but this woman bore no resemblance apparently to her. She looked older, more mature.

In my haste I noted that she had a bandage about her face, as if she had been injured recently, for there seemed to be blood on it where it had worked itself loose in her flight. She gave one glance at us, and quickened her pace at seeing us so close. The bandage, already loose, slipped off her face and fell to the floor. Still she did not seem other than a stranger to me, though I had a half-formed notion that I had seen that face somewhere before. She did not stop to pick the bandage up. She had gained the door and was down the front steps on the sidewalk before we could stop her.

Taxicabs in droves seemed to have collected, like buzzards over a dead body. They were doing a thriving business carrying away those who sought to escape. Into one by which a man was waiting in the shadow the woman hurried. The man looked for all the world like Dr. Harris. An instant later the chauffeur was gone.

The policeman had the front door of Madame Margot's covered all right, so efficiently that he was neglecting everything else. From the basement now and then a scurrying figure catapulted itself out and was lost in the curious crowd that always collects at any time of day or night on a New York street when there is any excitement.

"IT IS of no use to expect to capture any one now," exclaimed Craig, as we hurried back into the dope joint. "I hardly expected to do it. All I wanted was to protect Miss Kendall. But we have the evidence against this joint that will close it for good."

He stooped and picked up the bandage.

"I think I'll keep that," he remarked thoughtfully. "I wonder what that blond woman wore that for?"

"She *must* be up there," reiterated Clare, who had followed us. "I heard them talking, it seemed only the moment before I heard you in the hall."

The excitement seemed now to have the effect of quieting her unstrung nerves and carrying her through.

"Let us go upstairs," said Kennedy.

From room to room we hurried in the darkness, lighting the lights. They were all empty, yet each one gave its mute testimony to the character of its use and its former occupants. There were opium layouts with pipes, lamps, *yen haucks*, and other paraphernalia in some. In others had been cocain snuffers. There seemed to be everything for drug users of every kind.

At last in a small room in front on the top floor we came upon a girl, half insensible from a drug. She was vainly trying to make herself presentable for the street, ramblingly talking to herself in the meantime.

Again my hopes rose that we had found either the mysterious Marie Margot or Phyllis Royce. A second glance caused us all to pause in surprise and disappointment.

It was the Titian-haired girl from the Montmartre office.

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CHAPTER XV

THE BLOOD CRYSTALS

KENNEDY seemed to realize now that the issue had at last been joined in the open and that he must work quickly if we were to win against the combined forces of the underworld which would now be actively engaged to defeat us at every point.

Miss Kendall, recovering from the effect of the drugs which she had been compelled to take in her heroic attempt to get at the dope joint, was endeavoring to quiet the girl from the Montmartre, who, now vaguely recollecting us, seemed to realize that something had gone wrong and was trembling and crying pitifully.

"What's the matter with her?" I asked.

"Chloral," replied Miss Kendall in a low voice aside. "I suppose she has had a wild night which she has followed by chloral to quiet her nerves, with little effect. Didn't you ever see them? They will go into a drug store in this part of the city where such things are sold, weak, shaky, nervous wrecks. The clerk will sell them the stuff and they will retire for a moment into the telephone booth. Sometimes they will come out looking as though they had never felt a moment's effect from their wild debauches. But there are other times when they are too weakened to get over it so quickly. That is her case, poor girl."

The soothing hand which she laid on the girl's throbbing head was quite in contrast with the manner in which I recalled her to have spoken of the girl when first we saw her at the Montmartre. She must have seen the look of surprise on my face.

"I can't condemn these girls too strongly when I see them themselves," she remarked. "It would be so easy for them to stop and lead a decent life, if they only would forget the white lights and the gay life that allures them. It is when they are so down and out that I long to give them a hand to help them up again and show them how foolish it is to make slaves of themselves."

"Call a cab, Walter," said Kennedy, who had been observing the girl closely. "There is nothing more that we can expect to accomplish here. Everybody has escaped by this time. But we must get this poor girl in a private hospital or sanitarium where she can recover."

Clare had disappeared. A moment later she returned from the room she had had downstairs with her hat on.

"I'm going with her," she announced simply.

"What—you, Miss Kendall?"

"Yes. If a girl ever needed a friend, it is this girl now. There is nothing I can do for the moment. I will take care of her until she is herself again."

The girl seemed to half understand, and to be grateful to Clare. Kennedy watched her hovering over the drug victim without attempting to express the admiration which he felt.

Just as the cab was announced, he drew Miss Kendall aside. "You're a trump," he said frankly. "Most people would pass by on the other side of the way from such as she is."

They talked for a moment as to the best place to go, then decided on a quiet little place uptown where convalescents were taken in.

"I think you can still be working on the case, if you care to do so," suggested Craig as Miss Kendall and her charge were leaving.

"How?" she asked.

"When you get her to this sanitarium, try to be with her as much as you can. I think if any one can get anything out of her, you can. Remember it is more than this girl's rescue that is at stake. If she can be got to talk she may prove an important link toward piecing together the solution of the mystery of Phyllis Royce. She must know many of the inside secrets of the Montmartre," he added significantly.

They had gone, and Craig and I had started to go also when we came across a negro caretaker who seemed to have stuck by the place during all the excitement.

"Do you know that girl who just went out?" asked Craig.

"No sah," she replied glibly.

"Look here," demanded Craig, facing her. "You know better than that. She has been here before, and you know it. I've a good mind to have you held for being in charge of this place. If I do, all the Marie Margots and Ike the Droppers can't get you out again."

The negress seemed to understand that this was no ordinary raid.

"Who is she?" demanded Craig.

"I dunno, sah. She come from next door."

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"I know she did. She's the girl in the office of the Montmartre. Now, you know her. What is her name?"

The negress seemed to consider a moment, then quickly answered, "Dey always calls her Miss Sybil here, sah, Sybil Seymour, sah."

"Thank you. I knew you had some name for her. Come, Walter. This is over for the present. A raid without arrests, too! It will be all over town in half an hour. If we are going to do anything it must be done quickly."

WE CALLED on Carton and lost no time in having the men he could spare placed in watching the railroads and steamship lines to prevent if we could any of the gang from getting out of the city that way. It was a night of hard work with no results. I began to wonder whether they might not have escaped finally after all. There seemed to be no trace. Harris had disappeared, there was no clue to Marie Margot, no trace of the new blonde woman, not a syllable yet about Phyllis Royce herself.

Kennedy scarcely slept after we came in exhausted from our fruitless running down of faint clues. Early the next morning he was at work again in the laboratory. He was busily engaged in testing something through his powerful microscopes and had a large number of curious microphotographs spread out on a table. As I watched him, apparently there was nothing but the blood-stained gauze bandage which had been fastened to the face of the strange, light-haired woman, and on the stains on this bandage he was concentrating his attention. I could not imagine what he expected to discover from it.

I waited for Kennedy to speak, but he was too busy more than to notice that I had come in. I fell to thinking of that woman. And the more I thought of the fair face, the more I was puzzled by it. I felt somehow or other that I had seen it somewhere before, yet could not place it.

A second time I examined the unpublished photograph of Phyllis Royce as well as the pictures that had been published. The only conclusion that I could come to was that it could not be she, for although she was light-haired and of fair complexion, the face as I remembered it was that of a mature woman who was much larger than the slight Phyllis. Nor was it Mrs. Temple. I was sure of that.

Every time I reasoned it out I came to the same contradictory conclusion that I had seen her, and I hadn't. I gave it up, and as Kennedy seemed indisposed to enlighten me, I went for a stroll about the campus, returning as if drawn back to him by a lodestone.

ABOUT him was still the litter of test tubes, the photographs, the microscopes; and he was more absorbed in his delicate work than ever.

He looked up from his examination of a little glass slide and I could see by the crow's feet in the corners of his eyes that he was not looking so much at me as through me at a very puzzling problem.

"Walter," he remarked at length, "did you notice anything in particular about that blonde woman who dashed down the steps into the taxicab and escaped from the dope joint?"

"I should say that I did," I returned, glad to ease my mind of what had been perplexing me ever since. "I don't want to appear to be foolish, but, frankly, I thought I had seen her before, and then when I tried to place her I found that I could not recognize her at all. She seemed to be familiar, and yet when I tried to place her I could think of no one with just those features. It was a foolish impression, I suppose."

"That's just exactly it," he exclaimed. "I thought at first it was just a foolish impression, too, an intuition which my later judgment rejected. But often those first impressions put you on the track of the truth. I reconsidered. You remember she had dropped that bandage from her face with the blood-stain on it. I picked it up and it occurred to me to try a little experiment with those blood-stains which might show something."

He paused a moment and fingered some of the microphotographs.

"What would you say," he went on, "if I should tell you that a pronounced blonde, with a fair complexion and thin, almost hooked, nose was in reality a negress?"

"If it were any one but you, Craig," I replied frankly, "I'd be tempted to call him something. But you—well, what's the answer? How do you know?"

"I wonder if you have ever heard of the

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Reichert blood test? Well, the Carnegie Institution has recently published an account of it. Professor Edward Reichert of the University of Pennsylvania has discovered that the blood crystals of all animals and men show characteristic differences.

"It has even been suggested that before the studies are over photographs of blood corpuscles may be used to identify criminals, almost like finger prints. There is much that can be discovered already by the use of these hemoglobin clues. That hemoglobin, or red coloring matter of the blood, forms crystals has been known for a long time. These crystals vary in different animals, as they are studied under the polarizing microscope, both in form and molecular structure. That is of immense importance for the scientific criminologist.

"A man's blood is not like the blood of any other living creature, either fish, flesh or fowl. Further, it is said that the blood of a woman or a man and of different individuals shows differences that will reveal themselves under certain tests. You can take blood from any number of animals and the scientists to-day can tell that it is not human blood, but the blood, say, of an animal.

"The scientists now can go further. They even hope soon to be able to tell the difference between individuals so closely that they can trace parentage by these tests. Already they can actually distinguish among the races of men, whether a certain sample of blood, by its crystals, is from a Chinaman, a Caucasian or a negro. Each gives its own characteristic crystal. The Caucasian shows that he is more closely related to one group of primates; the negro to another. It is scientific proof of evolution.

"It is all the more wonderful, Walter, when you consider that these crystals are only 1-2250th of an inch in length and 1-9000th of an inch in width."

"How do you study them?" I asked.

"The method I employed was to take a little of the blood and add some oxalate of ammonium to it, then shake it up thoroughly with ether to free the hemoglobin from the corpuscles. I then separated the ether carefully from the rest of the blood mixture and put a few drops of it on a slide, covered them with a cover slip and sealed the edges with balsam. Gradually the crystals appear and they can be studied and photographed in the usual way—not only the shapes of the crystals, but also the relation that their angles bear to each other. So it is impossible to mistake the blood of one animal for another or of one race, like the white race, for that of another, like the black. In fact the physical characteristics by which some physicians profess to detect the presence of negro blood are held by other authorities to be valueless. But not so with this test."

"And you have discovered in this case?" I asked.

"That the blood on the bandage from the face of that woman who escaped was not the blood of a pure Caucasian. She shows traces of negro blood, in fact exactly what would have been expected of a mulatto."

IT DAWNED on me that the woman must have been Marie, after all; at least that that was what he meant.

"But," I objected, "one look at her face was enough to show that she was not the olive-skinned Marie with her straight nose, her dark hair and other features. This woman was fair, had a nose that was almost hooked and hair that was almost flaxen. Remember the *portrait parlé*."

"Just so—the *portrait parlé*. That is what I am remembering. You recall Carton discovered that in some way these people found out that we were using it? What would they do? Why, they have thought out the only possible way in which to beat it, don't you see?

"Marie, Madame Margot, whatever you call her, had a beauty parlor. Oh, they are clever, these people. They reasoned it all out. What was a beauty parlor, a cosmetic surgery, for, if it could not be used to save them? They knew we had her scientific description. What was the thing to do, then? Why, change it, of course, change *her!*"

Kennedy was quite excited now.

"You know what Miss Kendall said of decorative surgery, there? They change noses, ears, foreheads, chins, even eyes. They put the thing up to Dr. Harris with his knives and bandages and lotions. He must work quickly. It would take all his time. So he disappeared into Margot's and stayed there. Marie also stayed there until such time as she might be able to walk out, another person entirely. Harris must have

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had charge of her features. The attendants in Margot's had charge of her complexion and hair—those were their specialties.

"Don't you see it all now? She could retire a few days into the dope joint next door and she would emerge literally a new woman ready to face us, even with Bertillon's *portrait parlé* against her."

It was amazing how quickly Kennedy pieced the facts together into an explanation.

"Yes," he concluded triumphantly, "that blonde woman was our dark-skinned mulatto made over—Marie, the woman who called on Bayard so often. But they can't escape the power of science, even by using science themselves. She might change her identity to our eyes, but she could not before the Reichert test and the microscope. No, the Ethiopian could not change her skin before the eye of science."

CHAPTER XVI

DAMAGED GOODS

IT WAS early in the forenoon that Kennedy received a hurried telephone call from Miss Kendall. I could tell by the scraps of conversation which I overheard that it was the most important advance we had yet made in the case.

"That girl, Sybil Seymour, has broken down," was all he said. "She will be here to-night with Miss Kendall. I must see Carton immediately, and you, Walter, if you will be so kind, try to hunt up Haxworth. Tell him not to fail to be here, at this laboratory, to-night at eight—sharp."

He was gone before I could question him further, and there was nothing for me to do but to execute the commission he had laid on me.

I dined with Haxworth at his club, relating to him all that I could about the progress of the case, and half an hour before the appointed time we arrived at the laboratory in his motor car, to find Kennedy already there, putting the finishing touches on the preparations he was making to receive his "guests."

"Carton will be here to-night," he answered, evading Haxworth's direct question as to what he had discovered. "He has arranged to compel the attendance of Clarke and that lawyer Levine. They won't dare stay away. Ike the Dropper, Dr. Harris, and Marie Margot have not been found yet, but Miss Kendall will bring Sybil Seymour. They tell me Miss Padgett is out of town, and though I have tried to get her I haven't succeeded—yet."

The door opened and Carton entered. His cordial greeting of Haxworth was scarcely over when a motion in the hall heralded the arrival of some one else.

It was Colin Clarke and the lawyer Levine. Clarke seemed to treat the whole affair with contempt which he took pleasure in showing. Levine—who was of the type of cool, calm lawyer, master of himself in any situation no matter how hostile, knowing the law and damning the facts—had the air of one who said nothing, but watched keenly to take advantage of any technical errors that his opponents were sure to make.

It was interesting to me to see how the two men, Clarke and Haxworth, regarded each other. There was a cold condescension on the part of the clubman toward the young millionaire, as of one who could not understand, though for the time he must tolerate, one who gave up his social life for social work. Haxworth, on the other hand, though they exchanged no words beyond a nod of recognition, seemed anxious to convince Clarke of the sincerity of his position.

The strained silence, broken only by an occasional whisper between Carton and Kennedy, was relieved even by the arrival of Miss Kendall and Sybil Seymour in a cab. As they entered I fancied that a friendship had sprung up between the two, that Miss Kendall had won her fight for the girl. Indeed, I suspect that it was the first time in years that the girl had had a really disinterested friend of either sex.

Clarke visibly winced as he caught sight of Miss Seymour. He evidently had not expected her, and I thought he perhaps had no relish for the recollections of the Montmartre which her presence suggested. Miss Seymour, now like herself as she had appeared first behind the desk at the Montmartre, only subdued and serious, seemed ill at ease. Levine on the other hand bowed to her brazenly and mockingly. He was evidently preparing against any surprise which Craig might have in store.

It was fifteen minutes after the time which Craig had set for the meeting and still he had not begun. I wondered if he might not be waiting for Dorothy Padgett or some one else, but he said nothing about it,

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as he continued to busy himself with the finishing of his work.

"Perhaps Professor Kennedy can inform us regarding the purpose of this extra-legal proceeding," hemmed Levine, clearing his throat and looking at his watch ostentatiously. "Some of us, I know, have other engagements this evening. I would suggest that you begin, Professor."

He placed a sarcastic emphasis on the word professor, as the two men faced each other—Craig tall, clean-cut, earnest, Levine rotund, smooth, keen.

"Very well," replied Craig with that steel-trap snap of his jaws which I knew boded ill for some one.

With a quick motion, Kennedy switched off the lights and disclosed a large white sheet at the end of the room on which by the operation of an electric moving-picture machine he cast a huge square spot of bright light.

"Merely by way of preparing you for the points I expect to make as I proceed," began Kennedy, "I am going to show you first some motion pictures of blood, highly magnified. This is one of those new educational films that are being produced now—in this case one that was made for the medical profession. I am sorry our friend Dr. Harris is not here to see it, but no doubt, under the circumstances, he is glad to forego the pleasure."

The picture was nothing less than human blood, highly magnified, in motion. One could see the little round cells, the corpuscles, but what was positively uncanny was the presence of something which for all the world looked like a host of minute electric eels, always in motion.

KENNEDY singled out the wriggling cells. "To see this micro-organism move, evolve, and revolve in the midst of normal cells, uncoil and undulate in the fluids which it now inhabits, to see them hide behind the blood corpuscles or in clumps of fibrin, turn, twist, rotate inside a red corpuscle as if they were in a cage, to see them moving back and forth in every direction, displaying their delicate undulating membrane, shoving aside the blood cells that are in their way, while by their side the leucocytes, or white corpuscles, lazily extend or retract their pseudopods of protoplasm, as they are called, to see all this as it is presented here is to realize that we are in the presence of an unknown world, a world of the infinitesimally small, but nevertheless a world as real and as complex as that which is visible to our eyes. That is what the cinematograph and the ultramicroscope have given us, a vision of what no other form of photoggraphy can reproduce."

Always fascinated by moving pictures, I was more so at this example of what could be done with the machine which has become one of the most astounding and prodigious forces in the social organization of the time.

"You will notice," he went on, "this protozoön, as it is called, worm-like, a sheath of undulating membrane terminating in a slender whip-like process designed for locomotion. Protozoa are much larger than bacteria and can be seen with a comparatively low power microscope, swiftly darting between the blood cells, brushing them aside, but not penetrating them as much as other of the parasites. For they are parasites and that is a picture of a poisoned blood stream. That," he went on, measuring his words, "is the germ Spirochæta, a variety allied to the African sleeping sickness, the Philippine yaws, the Russian relapsing fever. It is nothing other than the germ of that common disease which afflicts vast numbers of humanity, one of the cruel, insidious scourges, which I shall call euphemistically blood disease."

There was a perceptible tremor that ran through our little audience at the graphic manner in which Kennedy had introduced his exposure and held the attention of even those who were hostile from the start.

The next picture was merely an enlarged microphotograph, to the scale of the moving pictures we had just seen. There were the same sort of corpuscles, the same corkscrew germs we had seen, only not in motion.

"This is a microphotograph I have made myself," explained Kennedy. "It is from the blood of a man who was intimately concerned in this case. Here is another"—he had flashed a second similar picture on the screen. "That is from the blood of a woman who also figures in the case, a woman for whom we are to-day searching under most peculiar circumstances. I could go on, if I had the evidence, no doubt, piling up instances of the extent of this poisoned blood stream. But that is not my purpose. That

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stream is dammed. This case will end it. I have another end in view."

The moving-picture machine had begun again, the film starting as the other one had ended. Suddenly it seemed as if something had happened. The twisting, turning Spirochætæ seemed to have become suddenly lethargic, to decrease.

"That shows graphically the effect of a drug," he pursued, "one of the recent discoveries in the new science of chemico-therapy, a derivative of arsenic and other elements — diethyldiamido-arseno-benzol—" Kennedy rolled the word off as if it were of one syllable "—otherwise known as salvarsan."

He did not pause, but hastened to the point of his exposure.

"In studying the blood of the murdered banker, Bayard, I found that it contained large quantities of arsenic or a derivative of arsenic. More than that, in the scrap basket in his office I found the remnants of a tube. Adhering to the tube were some particles of a yellow powder. From the shape of the tube and the appearance of the powder, I at once suspected that salvarsan had been used—perhaps had been given in large, lethal doses to cause his death.

"But then the unnatural whiteness of his face made me suspect that arsenic alone had been used. You are familiar, I suppose, with the fact that arsenic whitens the complexion, since some ladies use it in wafers for that purpose? In order to be sure that I was not overlooking anything I clipped a few hairs from the man's head. I am glad I did so. I found on analyzing those hairs that they, too, contained arsenic. It is a well known fact that when arsenic has been taken by a person for a long time, even the hair shows distinct traces of it.

"The fact of the matter is that graduated doses of arsenic were being given to Bayard in the guise of salvarsan, doses that would not kill in themselves, but which were accurately timed to kill in the end. Arsenic is not like other poisons. It is accumulative. Taken in small quantities it is not eliminated from the system. It stays there. It can be proportioned, by one who knows so as to kill in a month, a year. But it leaves indelible traces.

"How was this trail to be covered up? By the administration of the poison hidden in a drug—salvarsan, itself containing arsenic. Then if the arsenic were discovered, the guilty parties could point to the salvarsan and assert that that was the source of the poison—not the arsenic which they mixed with it. It was a diabolical scheme. It involved a long and concerted campaign to get rid of a man. It needed skill to carry it out, and that skill was furnished by a woman. Now why was this murder of Bayard so carefully planned? How was it executed and by whom?"

Kennedy paused and let us weigh the probabilities.

"Twice, at least, I have seen a certain person handing out tubes of this drug, the real drug without its fatal complement of arsenic, to those who were in some way connected with the crowd who frequent the Montmartre.

"One was Ike the Dropper, agent for the police and a corrupt politician. The other was a mulatto woman, almost white, who conducted a beauty parlor and a dope joint nearby, a friend and associate of Ike the Dropper, a constant go-between from Ike to the corrupt gang who kept the Montmartre from being closed, to Bayard, the banker and trusted agent of the Padgett estate. This woman managed to secure a hold over him, and acted as the connecting link between him and Dr. Harris, who was dispensing the drug.

"This woman is the one I have just mentioned, whom we have been seeking by use of Bertillon's new system of the *portrait parlé*. She has escaped for the time by a clever ruse, by changing her very face in the beauty parlor—Madame Margot herself."

Not a word was breathed by any of the little audience as they hung on Kennedy's words.

"Why was it necessary to get Bayard out of the way?" he asked. "They knew and District Attorney Carton knows. They were afraid of Carton and his crusade. They knew that Bayard was, to use an expression common among them, 'getting cold feet.' He was a high-class banker—with a conscience. At any time he might recommend to the Padgett estate the discontinuance of the uses to which its property was being put. Then what would become of the graft? If the pursuit of the vice hunters became too hot, he might yield. The only safety for the grafters lay in having Bayard out of the way."

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KENNEDY had tossed down a letter on the table. It was the blackmail letter that had been secured by Carton, involving Clarke.

"Who, then, would be the best to have as the virtual manager of the Padgett estate? Clearly the man whom these people knew to be already so deeply in their toils that he could never escape—Clarke, the fiancé of Dorothy Padgett, the heiress."

"Had in their toils? How?" demanded Levine contemptuously, picking up the letter and reading it. "Did they not try to blackmail him? How could they expect anything from him?"

"For the simple reason that he could be blackmailed successfully. There was no question but that he would allow the Montmartre, the beauty parlor and the dope joint go on unhampered as far as the estate was concerned. That was what they could not expect from Bayard any longer."

"Besides," interrupted Miss Kendall, "we know that every means was also being exerted to influence Miss Padgett to allow things to go on as they were. Mrs. Temple, innocent enough in herself, no doubt, was used to gloss over the character of the place. Miss Padgett's fiancé put in a word. Once even she herself came to those who were engaged in discovering the truth——"

"Pouf!" cut in Clarke himself. "Miss Padgett cares nothing about what the property is used for. Why should she? It is none of her business—or yours."

"Nothing to her?" demanded Haxworth.

"No," shouted Clarke in anger.

"Nothing to her that she is to marry a man who is known intimately by everybody who frequents the Montmartre?"

It was Sybil Seymour, her face blazing with resentment against the man.

"You lie!" exclaimed the polished clubman, forgetting his gallantry and superciliousness.

The situation was tense as the furious woman faced him.

"Go on, Sybil," urged Clare.

"Be careful, woman," interrupted Levine roughly.

Sybil Seymour turned quickly to her new assailant.

"You are the man who has coined us all into dollars," she scorned. "Levine, lawyer, local politician, man higher up! You reaped the profits through your dirty agent Ike the Dropper and the police whom you controlled. Dr. Harris, Marie Margot, all are your tools—and the worst of them all is that man beside you."

Levine's face was livid. For once in his life he was speechless as the girl poured out the gossip of the Montmartre which Kennedy had now stamped with the earmarks of legal proof.

Suddenly she turned from Levine, as if from an unclean animal, and faced Clarke.

"As for you, Colin Clarke, they call you a clubman and society leader. Do you want to know what club you really belong to—you for whom one girl after another has been abducted and seduced so that you could be involved with this gang so deeply that you could never be extricated? You belong to the Abduction Club. That is your Club—you—you libertine!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE ABDUCTION CLUB

HAXWORTH was facing Clarke.

"Is that true?" he demanded, adding, "about the Montmartre?"

"She lies."

"It is true," reiterated Sybil. "He is the man who led me on, who would have led on Phyllis Royce—he and the others. There is a crowd of them—rich, respected—an abduction club, I call it. I yielded, but she fought. They could not conquer her—neither by drugs nor drink, nor by clothes, nor a good time, nor force. I saw it all in the Montmartre and the beauty parlor—all."

"Lies—all lies," hissed Clarke, beside himself with anger.

"No, no," cried Sybil. "I do not lie. Mr. Haxworth and this good woman, Miss Kendall, who is working for him, are the first people I have seen since you, Colin Clarke, brought me to the Montmartre, who have ever given me a chance to become again what I was before you and your friends got me."

"Have a care, young woman," interrupted Levine, recovering himself as she proceeded. "There are laws and——"

"I don't care a rap about laws such as yours. As for gangs—that was what you were going to say— I'd snap my fingers in the face of Ike the Dropper himself if he were here. You could kill me, but I would tell the truth.

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"Let me tell you my case," she continued, turning in appeal to the rest of us, "the case of a poor girl in a small city near New York, who liked a good time, liked pretty clothes, a ride in an automobile, theaters, excitement, bright lights, night life. I liked them, as Dorothy Padgett likes them—only I was not an heiress.

"He knew that. He led me on, made me like him. And when I began to show the strain of the pace—we all show it more than the men—he cast me aside, like a squeezed-out lemon. He wanted another girl like Sybil Seymour. He ran across her one day in Madame Margot's, where she was trying for a few dollars to look like those who had thousands. That girl was Phyllis Royce.

"He tried the same arts and blandishments on her that he did on me, this man, with the aid of his friends Levine and even Bayard, though I will say for Bayard that he was man enough to prefer those who had already been started on the downward path.

"He played on her love of beauty and Madame Margot helped him. He used the Montmartre and the Futurist to fascinate her, but still she was not his. She let herself drift along, perhaps because she knew that her family was every bit the equal socially of his own. Madame Margot tried drugs; first the doped cigarette, then drugs that had to be forced on her. She kept her in that joint for days by force; and there where I went for relief day after day from my own bitter thoughts I saw her, in that hell which Miss Kendall now by her evidence will close forever. Still she would not yield.

"I saw it all. Maybe you will say I was jealous because I had lost him. I was not. I hated him. You do not know how close hate can be to love in the heart of a woman. I could not help it. I had to write a letter that might save her.

"Miss Kendall has told me about the typewritten letters; how you, Professor Kennedy, traced them to the Montmartre. I wrote them, I admit, for these people. I wrote the blackmail letter for Marie Margot and Ike the Dropper. I wrote that stuff about drugs for Dr. Harris. And I wrote the first letter of all to the District Attorney. I wrote it for myself and signed it as I am—God forgive me— 'An Outcast.' "

The poor girl, overwrought by the strain of the confession that laid bare her very soul, sank back in her chair and cried, as Miss Kendall gently tried to soothe her.

Levine and Clarke listened sullenly. Never in their lives had they dreamed of such a situation as this.

There was no air of triumph about Kennedy now over the confession which with the aid of Miss Kendall he had staged so effectively. Rather it was a spirit of earnestness, of retribution, justice.

"You know all this?" he inquired gently of the girl.

"I saw it," she said simply, raising her bowed head.

Levine had been doing some quick thinking. He leaned over and whispered quickly to Clarke.

"Why was Phyllis Royce not discovered then when these detectives broke into the private house—an act which they themselves will have to answer for when the time comes?" demanded Clarke.

It seemed as if the mere sound of his voice roused the girl.

"BECAUSE it was dangerous to keep her there any longer," she replied. "I heard the talk about the hotel, the rumor that some one was using this new French detective scheme. I heard them blame the District Attorney—who was clever enough to have others working on the case whom you did not know. While you were watching his officers, Mr. Kennedy and Miss Kendall were gathering evidence almost under your very eyes.

"But you were panic-stricken. You and your agents wanted to remove the danger of discovery. Dr. Harris and Marie Margot had a plan which you grasped at eagerly. There was Ike the Dropper, that scoundrel who lives on women. Between them you would spirit her away. You were glad to have them do it, little realizing that with every step they had you involved deeper and worse. They have a strangle hold on you to-day, Colin Clarke. You dare not move unless they consent.

"They know it. They know that the truth would ruin you if it came to the ears of the young lady to whom you are engaged. You forgot everything, all honor and manhood in your panic; you were ready to consent, to urge any course that would relieve you—and you have taken the course that involves you worse than any other."

"Who will believe a story like that?"

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demanded Clarke. "What are you—according to your own confession? Am I to be charged with everything this gang, as you call it, does? You are their agent, perhaps working for this blackmailing crew. But I tell you, I will fight, I will not be blackened by——"

Sybil laughed, half hysterically.

"Blackened?" she repeated. "You who would put this thing all off on others who worked for you, who played on your vices and passions, not because you were weak, but because you thought you were above the law!

"You did not care what became of that girl, so long as she was where she could not accuse you. You left her to that gang, to Ike, to Marie, to Harris." She paused a moment and flashed a quick glance of scorn at him. "Do you want to know what has become of her, what you are responsible for?

"I will tell you. They had other ideas than just getting her out of the way of your selfish career. They are in this life for money. Phyllis Royce to them was a marketable article, a piece of merchandise in the terrible traffic which they carry on. If she had been yielding, like the rest of us, she might now have been apparently free, yet held by a bondage as powerful and unescapable as if it were of iron, a life from which she could not escape. But she was not yielding. They would break her. Perhaps you have tried to ease your conscience, if you have any, by the thought that it is they, not you, who have her hidden away somewhere now. You cannot escape that way; it was you who made her, who made others of us what we are."

"LET her rave, Clarke," sneered Levine.

"Yes—raving, that's it," echoed Clarke. But his expression belied him.

"There it is," she continued. "You have not even an opinion of your own. You repeat even the remarks of others. They have you in their power. You have put yourself there. They can bleed you, blackmail you—and you will pay. Mr. Bayard they could not blackmail. They were afraid of him. But with you it is different. You are putty in their hands. God pity the poor unfortunates who will fall into their hands when you become virtual head of the Padgett estate!"

"All very pretty," remarked Levine with biting sarcasm. "All very cleverly thought out. So nice here! Wait until you have to tell that story in court. You know the first rule of equity? Do you go into court with clean hands? There is a day of reckoning coming to you, young woman, and to these other meddlers here—whether they are playing politics or meddling just because they are old-maidish busybodies."

She was facing the lawyer and politician with burning cheeks.

"You," she scorned, "belong to an age that is passing away. You can not understand these people like Miss Kendall, like Mr. Haxworth, who can not be bought and controlled like your other creatures. You do not know how the underworld can turn on the upperworld. You would not pull us up—you shoved us down deeper, in your greed. But if we go down, we shall drag you, too. What have we to lose? You and your creatures, like Mr. Clarke, have taken everything from us. We——"

"Come, Clarke," interposed Levine, deliberately turning his back on her and slowly placing his hat on his half bald head. "We are indebted to Professor Kennedy for a pleasant evening's entertainment. When he has another show equally original we trust he will not forget the first-nighters who have enjoyed this farce."

Levine had opened the door. I had expected Kennedy to reply. But he said nothing. He did not even touch the button of the electric attachment, which I knew was under his table, by which he could lock every door and window of the laboratory instantly and silently.

"Good night," bowed Clarke with mock solemnity. "Thank you for laying the cards on the table. We shall know how to play——"

"Colin!"

He turned, startled, and we strained our eyes at the voice of a woman in the darkness of the hallway.

There, in the light which Kennedy had switched on full, stood Dorothy Padgett, pale, wild-eyed.

"What is this? Professor Kennedy—asked me to come. I am late. What is the trouble?"

"Nothing, Dorothy. Just a pack of lies that Haxworth has framed up against me."

Dorothy Padgett flashed an inquiring glance at Haxworth. He met her look in silence.

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I saw that she had heard all, as Kennedy had intended that she should.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WHITE SLAVE

"WHERE is Phyllis Royce?" asked Dorothy Padgett, turning to Sybil Seymour. "Where did they take her?"

We hung breathlessly on the answer. Was she being held as a white slave in some obscure den? I knew that that did not mean that she was necessarily imprisoned behind locked doors and barred windows, although even that might be the case. I knew that the restraint might be just as effective, even though it was not actually or wholly physical.

An ordinary girl, I reasoned, with little knowledge of her rights or of the powers which she might call to her aid if she knew how to summon them, might she not be so hemmed in by the forces into whose hands she had fallen as to be practically held in bonds which she could not break?

Here was Sybil herself. Once she had been like Phyllis Royce. Indeed, when she seemed to have every chance to escape she did not. She knew how she could be pursued, hounded at every turn, forced back, and her only course was to sink deeper into the life. The thought of what might be accomplished by drugs startled me.

Clare bent over the poor girl reassuringly. What was it that seemed to freeze her tongue now? Was it still some vestige of the old fear under which she had been held so long? Clare strove, although we could not hear what she was saying, to calm her.

At last Sybil raised her head, with a wild cry, as if she were sealing her own doom.

"It was Ike. He kept us all in terror. Oh, if he hears he will kill me," she blurted out.

"Where did he take her?" asked Clare.

She had broken down the girl's last fear.

"To that place on the West Side—that black and tan joint, where Marie Margot came from before the gang took her in."

"Haxworth," called Kennedy. "Your car holds seven, doesn't it? You and Walter will take the ladies. You will go, Miss Padget—please? Let me see. Carton, Clarke, Levine and myself will ride in the taxicab."

Carton was toying ostentatiously with a police whistle as Clarke and Levine hesitated, then entered the cab.

I think at the joint, as we pulled up with a rush after our wild ride downtown, they must have thought that a party of revelers had dropped in to see the sights. It was perhaps just as well that they did, for there was no alarm at first.

As we entered the black and tan joint, I took another long look at its forbidding exterior. Below, it was a saloon and dance hall; above, it was a "hotel." It was weatherbeaten, dirty and unsightly without, except for the entrance; unsanitary, ramshackle, within, except for the tawdry decorations. At every window were awnings and all were down, although it was on the shady side of the street in the daytime and it was now night. That was the mute signpost to the initiated of the character of the place.

Instead of turning downstairs where we had gone on our other visit, Kennedy led the way up through a door that read, "Hotel Entrance—Office."

A clerk at a desk in a little alcove on the second floor mechanically pushed out a register at us, then seeming to sense trouble, pulled it back quickly and with his foot gave a sharp kick at the door of a little safe, locking the combination.

"I'm looking for some one," was all Kennedy said. "This is the District Attorney. We'll go through——"

"Yes, you will!"

It was Ike the Dropper. He had heard the commotion, and, seeing ladies, came to the conclusion that it was not a police plain-clothes raid, but some new game of the reformers.

He stopped short in amazement at the sight of Clarke and Levine in the rear.

"Well—I'll be——"

"Haxworth! Walter!" shouted Kennedy. "Take care of him. Watch out for a knife or gun. He's soft, though. Carton—the whistle!"

Our struggle with the redoubtable Ike was short and quickly over. Sullen, and with torn clothes and bleeding face, we held him until the policeman arrived, and turned him over to the law.

At a room on the same floor Craig knocked.

"Come in," answered a woman's voice.

He pushed open the door. There was the woman who had fled so precipitately from the dope joint.

Evidently she did not recognize us.

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"You are under arrest," announced Kennedy.

The blonde woman laughed mockingly.

"Under arrest? For what?"

"You are Marie Margot. Never mind about your alias. All the arts of your employees and Dr. Harris himself cannot change you so that I cannot recognize you. You may feel safe from the *portrait parlé*, but there are other means of detection that you never dreamed of. Where is Phyllis Royce? Marie, it's all off!"

ALL the brazen assurance with which she had met us was gone. She looked from one to the other and read that it was the end. With a shriek, she suddenly darted past us, out of the door. A moment she hesitated. Down the hall was Ike the Dropper with the policeman and Carton. Beside her was a stairway leading to the upper floors. She chose the stairs.

Following Kennedy we hurried through the hotel, from one dirty room to another, with their loose and creaking floors, rotten and filthy, sagging as we walked, covered with matting that was rotting away. Damp and unventilated, the air was heavy and filled with foul odors of tobacco, perfumery and cheap disinfectants. There seemed to have been no attempt to keep the place clean.

The rooms were small and separated by thin partitions through which conversations in even low tones could be heard. The furniture was cheap and worn with constant use.

Downstairs we could hear the uproar as the news spread that the District Attorney was raiding the place. As fast as they could the sordid crowd in the dance hall and cabaret was disappearing. Now and then we could hear a door bang, a hasty conference, and then silence as some of the inmates realized that upstairs all escape was cut off.

On the top floor we came to a door, locked and bolted. With all the force that he could gather in the narrow hall, Kennedy catapulted himself against it. It yielded in its rottenness with a crash.

A woman, in all her finery, lay across the foot of a bed, a formless heap. Kennedy turned her over. It was Marie, motionless, but still breathing faintly. In an armchair, with his hands hanging limply down almost to the floor, his head sagging forward on his chest, sprawled Harris.

Kennedy picked up a little silver receptacle on the floor where it lay near his right hand. It was nearly empty, but as he looked from it quickly to the two insensible figures before us he muttered: "Morphine. They have robbed the law of its punishment."

He bent over the suicides, but it was too late to do anything for them. They had paid the price.

"MY HEAVENS!" he exclaimed suddenly, as a thought flashed over his mind. "I hope they have not carried the secret of Phyllis Royce with them to the grave. Where is Miss Kendall?"

Down the hall, cut off from the rest of the hotel into a sort of private suite, Clare had entered one of the rooms and was bending over a pale, wan shadow of a girl, tossing restlessly on a bed. The room was scantily furnished with a dilapidated bureau in one corner and a rickety washstand equipped with a dirty washbowl and pitcher. A few cheap chromos on the walls were the only decorations, and a small badly soiled rug covered a floor innocent for many years of soap.

I looked sharply at the girl lying before us. Somehow it did not occur to me who she was. She was so worn that any one might safely have transported her through the streets and never have been questioned, in spite of the fact that every paper in the country which prints pictures had published her photograph, not once but many times.

It was Phyllis Royce at last, struggling against the drugs that had been forced on her, half conscious, but with one firm and acute feeling left—resistance to the end.

Kennedy had dropped on his knees before her and was examining her closely.

"Open the windows—more air," he ordered. "Walter, see if you can find some ice water and a little stimulant."

While Craig was taking such restorative measures as were possible on the spur of the moment, Miss Kendall gently massaged her head and hands.

She seemed to understand that she was in the hands of friends, and though she did not know us her mute look of thanks was touching.

"Don't get excited, my dear," breathed

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Miss Kendall into her ear. "You will be all right soon."

As the wronged girl relaxed from her constant tension of watching, it seemed as if she fell into a stupor. Now and then she moaned feebly, and words, half formed, seemed to come to her lips only to die away.

Suddenly she seemed to have a vision more vivid than the rest.

"No—no—— Mr. Clarke—leave me. Where—my mother—oh where is mother?" she cried hysterically, sitting bolt upright and staring at us without seeing us.

Kennedy passed the broad palm of his hand over her forehead and murmured, "There, there, you are all right now." Then he added to us: "I did not send for her mother because I wasn't sure that we might find her even as well as this. Will some one find Carton? Get the address and send a messenger for Mrs. Royce."

Dorothy Padgett was on her knees by the bedside of the girl, holding Phyllis's hand in both of her own.

"You poor, poor girl," she cried softly. "You must take a long rest at my country house, you and Sybil. Oh, how can I ever forgive myself? I—I am responsible for this. I did not know, I did not care. It is—dreadful."

She had sunk her head into the worn and dirty covers of the bed. Kennedy reached over and took hold of her arm. "She will be all right, soon, Miss Padgett," he said reassuringly.

"I—I feel like that woman in there," she responded, looking up at him with a shudder as she nodded toward the room we had just left with its hideous occupants who had paid the price.

She had risen. Kennedy still held her arm. "Come," he said. "Miss Padgett, you have seen enough of this terrible place. Miss Kendall and Sybil will take good care of her."

AS WE descended the stairs, we could see Carton at the foot. A patrol wagon had been backed up to the curb in front and the inmates of the place were being taken out, protesting violently at being detained as witnesses.

Further down the hall, by the "office," Clarke and Levine were storming at the authority that held them under arrest now, protesting that "influence" would "break" every one concerned, from Carton down to the innocent patrolman.

As we approached, they stopped. It was a tense moment as Dorothy Padgett faced her fiancé with a look of withering scorn.

All the pride of generations of Padgetts seemed to rise in her and seal the tears to which another heartbroken and disillusioned girl might have given way.

But the restraint which she exercised over her feelings was almost more than human nature could stand unaided.

Slowly her drawn face turned in silent appeal from one to another of the group of strangers about her until at last her eyes rested on Haxworth.

He said not a word, but the silent glance that he gave her was eloquent in clearing away the misunderstanding.

"You were," she hesitated, tremulously, "you were right, after all. I am the victim of my own fortune. We all are, if we are not careful. It *does* matter what other people do. You—you have saved me from myself, Guy."

It needed only that word. Haxworth was at her side in a moment, as, with the revulsion of feeling, she swayed an instant, as if she would have fallen.

"May I—may I call a cab," he asked simply, as he caught her, "and see you safely home, Dorothy?"

"Yes," she said, with an effort regaining control of herself. It was as if she felt safe again. "Yes," she murmured, gazing about with a hasty shudder, "home."

The accent that she gave the word sounded strangely in this suicide hall—the very antithesis of home, as her woman's instinct told her.

As they descended the flight of steps to the street, Dorothy Padgett seemed oblivious to everything else. Haxworth even forgot to nod a good-by.

"Our work is over, Miss Kendall," remarked Kennedy, pausing as if he might have said more, but refrained.

"Yes," she replied, with a significant glance at Haxworth and Dorothy as they entered the waiting cab. "I shall forget that name plate now which I said should be placed on the properties of the Padgett estate."

Carton had taken away his prisoners. She turned, looked Craig frankly in the face and extended her hand in that same cordial straight-arm shake with which they had met, then added, as if finishing her last remark, "But not the memory of this fight we have won."

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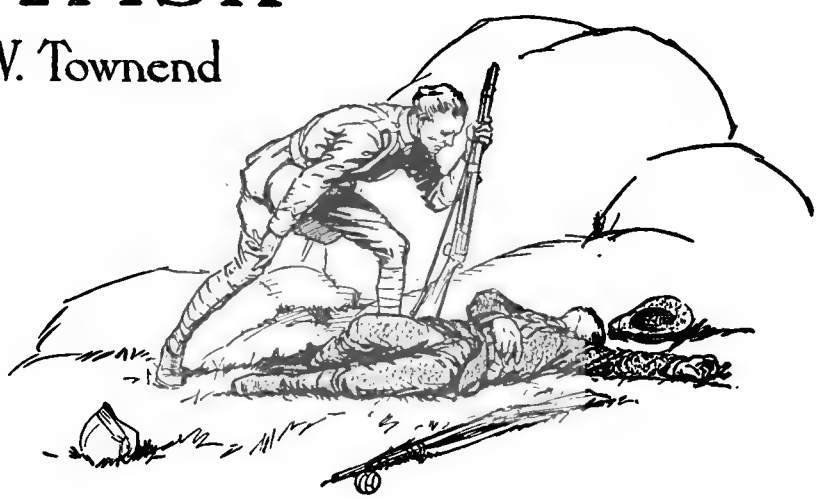
Irish

By W. Townend



THE English are a great and masterful people, powerful and proud above all other peoples. This is incontrovertible, admitted by all —especially by the English.

Hence the British Empire.

Now there is also another race called the Irish, who inhabit a small, rain-swept island, far and far away; which island is part of the Empire.

Also, there is no subject on this earth on which the English are quite so ready to talk as this same island.

Hence the Irish Question and the ramifications thereof, not to be discussed here.

Hence also—though this does not follow in the least—eight most wonderful Regiments of Foot.

LARRY MAGILL came from the west of Galway, from Connemara; an unforgettable land of rugged cliffs and deep, twisting bays, purple mountains and bog, green grass and pink heather, soft wet sea fogs and gray skies.

Patrick Magill, his father, silent and bearded, gained a scanty livelihood from a small patch of ground and a half share in an old fishing-boat. He toiled early and late, fair weather and foul, getting drunk at the shebeen by the crossroads no oftener than was proper, on holy days and other acknowledged festivals.

He was a mournful man, much given to sitting crouched over the fire of a Winter's evening, when the wind sobbed across the hills from the Western Ocean; brooding dumbly over the past, smoking and gazing into the dull red glow of the turf. And these were no times to interrupt him with idle chatter, as Larry and his brothers well knew.

Anne, wife of Patrick, wrinkled and bowed before her time, also toiled, uncomplaining, from morning to night, year in and year out, as was her duty; tramping many weary miles over bad roads, wrapped in her plaid shawl, with eggs and ducks for sale; digging potatoes; ministering to the wants of the poultry; and bringing up a large family, burying those that died, decently, with much grief and hospitality.

The Magills, together with many dogs, cats, hens, goats and pigs, inhabited a lonely tumbledown cabin midway between Lough Corrib and the sea, on a bleak, gaunt hillslope, back from the winding cart track.

Here Larry, the youngest, a small, snub-nosed, red-haired boy, spent his early years, happy and unquestioning, knowing neither grief nor trouble, having no ambition other than to fill his stomach and get more than his portion of the stewed tea and potatoes.

As he grew older, Larry took his share in the work, gathering turf, weeding turnips, or trudging barefoot to market with his mother, where he trafficked produce and

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bartered with wisdom beyond his years. On occasion he even penetrated as far as Galway Town itself—a marvelous enchantment of splendid shops and streets, exceeding all belief. Nevertheless, Larry found time to fish and wander for miles and miles over the hills. Also he attended and took part in all weddings, funerals, fairs and such-like within reach—events which occurred only too seldom.

How he had learned it, or when, Larry neither knew nor cared. But, from his earliest days, he took it as an accepted fact that his father, Patrick Magill, had spent many years in jail. In token of which, strangers would come to the small cabin and talk bitterly about the Oppressor and Tyrants, Serfs in Bondage and a Struggle to Be Faced; mysteries to Larry. Afterward, on their going, Patrick Magill would be more silent than before.

Larry took pride in that his eldest brother had also been in trouble with the police, and had been forced to leave home for America, whither the others were following one by one. As for America, Larry knew, for a fact, that if you stood on the cliff and looked seaward where the sails showed dark against the setting sun, and went on and on, you came to America; a land where there was money to be made and everybody was as free as air. This was the place for him. Some day when he had saved his passage money, he also was going. He would not stop on in Ireland, crushed and stifled by the Oppressor—a shadowy unknown, plotting Heaven alone knew what terrors.

Thus early did Larry Magill discover his destiny.

IN THE years following, Larry, doing as his brothers had done, became many things in turn—turf boy, donkey boy, stable lad, groom's help and gardener; gaining much weird and useful knowledge of the ways of horses and cattle; picking up the smatterings of an education; drifting from place to place, till he knew all Galway from Slyne Head and the Twelve Pins, to 'way beyond Loughrea as far as the Shannon.

Things began to go badly with Patrick Magill these days. He was ailing, crippled and racked by rheumatism, unable to work. Whereupon there followed trouble over the rent, and a summons to leave the cabin.

News being brought to Larry, he tramped back in the Summer sunshine to find his father dying.

Larry scarcely recognized him. His cheeks were hollow, his beard white, his eyes dull and blue filmed.

He beckoned Larry to the bedside.

Larry stooped down; his mother moaned and rocked in a corner of the smoky room.

"Look at meself, Larry—poor owld Pathrick Magill—that's lyin' here wake and helpless, 'tis hardly I'll see the mornin'."

His voice was a mere whisper.

"Sorra fear o' that. You'll be——"

Larry trailed off miserably. The sick man's eyes closed. There was no sound for some time. Then he spoke again.

"Yerself knows——"

After a pause he raised himself on his elbow.

"May the curse of a dyin' man be with thim! May their sowls rot in——"

His head fell back helplessly.

"God help him!" said Larry, "'twould dhrive a chill through ye to——"

The latch clicked and the parish priest, tenderest and wisest of mortals, entered to help Patrick Magill safely from one world to another.

LARRY'S hard-earned savings went to pay the rent. He took over his father's work and lived with his mother in the cabin on the hillside.

But Larry met with no better fortune than had Patrick. The share in the boat had been sold long since. The pigs and poultry, in spite of unremitting labor, died off. Even the potatoes failed. Larry felt that fate was fighting against him. Try as he might, he was behindhand with the money, and at last there came a demand, too peremptory to be disregarded, that they should depart from their home.

Larry laughed. The cabin was little better than a ruin as it was, and he waited for the end, avoiding all comfort.

What would have happened in due course did not. Anne Magill, widow of Patrick, blind to the benefits of life, conveniently took it unto herself to die.

As he turned from the grave in the small churchyard, Larry knew that the bonds that held him were snapped. Dry-eyed and white-faced, he stumbled back for his last night at home. Early the next morning he trudged off, penniless and without hope, along the white road to seek his fortune.

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Now, properly speaking, taking into consideration his upbringing and the history of his father, Larry Magill should have done anything but what he did.

In brief, after some weeks' discouragement, dazed through drink and lack of food, Larry fell in with a big, pleasant-voiced man in a scarlet coat, wearing a sash over his right shoulder. Larry listened to him, scowling.

Then, the grim humor of the situation striking him, not knowing whence was to come his next meal, Larry Magill enlisted in, as the Sergeant said, the only Regiment worth joining; a Regiment with many battle honors and green facings.

This is, of course, no explanation why Larry Magill, hater of the Saxon, should have enlisted in the British Army.

PRIVATE MAGILL, sullen and bewildered, spent the following months at the depot going through a depressing, backaching course of drill and gymnastics, never ceasing to regret each day from reveille at six to lights-out at ten-fifteen, that he had been so mad as to join the Army.

He learned many things in those months, things that were not taught him on the barrack square. It was easy enough to walk, wear a uniform and handle a rifle in the correct manner; there were other things that Private Magill mastered but slowly, with much bitterness and wrath. He hated everything connected with his new existence. Also, he was very homesick.

In due course, he was transferred with a draft to the First Battalion, stationed in England, in a smoky manufacturing town in the West Riding, where they made knives and rolled steel armor plate for battleships. Hereupon Larry Magill's education began once more, and yet again, bewildered and unresponsive, he found much to learn.

It was hammered into his head by his roommates that the Regiment was the smartest and best Regiment in the Service. Nevertheless, Larry, seated miserably in the whitewashed barrack room, heard much that amazed him. The Army was rotten, root and branch; they were slaves, ill-treated, persecuted; they could not call their souls their own; to —— with everybody, from the Colonel down to the Adjutant and the Sergeant Major; they were sick and tired; the English were no better than murderers. And yet—never, never, never was it to be forgotten that they belonged to the best Regiment in the whole world.

It was puzzling, and listening to their multifold grievances, Private Magill wondered why Privates Dan Sullivan, Mick Flanagan, Faskally, Daly, Andy Neligan and others, new-found acquaintances of his, submitted for one moment to those that ground them down. The men in his room, on their part, did not understand Larry, who glowered at all and sundry and chummed with no one, contrary to the custom of all right-minded soldiers.

"Faith! I declare to ye now," exclaimed Private Faskally, fresh from the canteen. "Look there! The Reg'mint's in a bad way, when we gets the like o' that, living beside of dacent Christians."

He pointed as he spoke to Larry pipe-claying his belt and pouches.

"'Tis the lasht sthraw. The scum o' Linen Hall and Kilmainham. Or is it knee dhrill that's throublin' ye?"

And Private Faskally reached out and cheerfully scattered Larry's belongings to the four corners. Whereat Larry rose and gave battle terribly. When the corporal entered, he found Larry with puffed-out nostrils and tight-lipped mouth standing over Faskally, who, for the first time in five years, acknowledged his master.

Larry, ever ready for a fight, met many willing to oblige, but he discovered through bitter experience that on occasion it were necessary to endure in silence. This more particularly when dealing with those who wore stripes on the right sleeve. He early came into conflict with his color sergeant over the question of dirty buttons on parade, and the next morning paid the first of numerous visits to the orderly-room.

"That fella's no good," said Mick Flanagan to Larry, who raged wrathfully over his first taste of pack drill and C. B.* "The low, dhirty undherlooper!"

"Ah! may the divil roast him! He's a spleen ag'in' me. I was no more dhirty than the Colonel himself."

"He was mad altogether."

"Hivin help him! He'll be apt to get more than he's axing for, if iver I——"

Larry's threat ended in a low growl. And they slouched off together to the canteen—closed to Larry, he being a defaulter, save for one brief hour each evening.

*C. B.—Confined to barracks.

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Crimes, so-called, in the British Army are of a varied nature. Larry sampled many varieties; from being drunk and overstaying his leave to dirty on parade, also on occasion being handed over for judgment for hesitating to obey an order and insolence to an N-C. O. As a consequence he suffered many punishments from fourteen days' C. B. with fines to ninety-six hours' cells.

After each one of these outbursts and its attendant penalties, Larry would sit on his iron bedcot, glum and moody, waiting for cause to take offense. Or he would drink by himself in the canteen, speaking to no one, till the fit passed and he could return to a normal state of being and companionship, which by this time had come to mean sitting around a barrack table in the canteen, drinking beer with his fellows.

Larry never said much—herein he took after his father—but he was a good listener. What others talked of sank deeply into his mind. He discovered that he was not the only sufferer at the hand of the hated Saxon. Their homes had been broken up also. He heard tales of cruel oppression and vengeance thereon, equally cruel, that stirred his blood—of the Clan-na-Gael and the days of the League; and he drank deeply, full of wild thoughts.

"I dunno in the world why did I enlist," said Dan Sullivan, "but they knew me a dale too well in Donegal Place. There was the matther of a polisman or two in it that they were curious about. That's what had thim follyin' me. An' it was in Dublin that I was in the thick of a row in liss than no time. Fill it up, bhoy; I'm as dhry's a herrin' bone."

Private Neligan, the black-browed, took up the tale.

"Ah, Dan! B'lieve me, 'twas undhesarved suspicion of a sharge of buckshot in a magisthrate's back—divil tak' him!—that brought me here. Tied body an' sowl to the Army it is. Here's to batthles!"

"Faith! Do ye believe it, me owld Fenian? There's niver a batthle we'll see! Sure, I'm telling you, the Reg'mint's not been in the fiel' since the siventies, long ago times."

"Where was that, Flanagan?" asked Larry from the end of the table.

"Africa. Ye can see the little name on the Reg'mintal color anny day."

"I wondher what it's like to be fightin'," Larry went on.

"Ye wouldn't see as much fun as what ye'd git out of the Twelfth of July in Belfast. But *we* wouldn't fight. To win batthles for thim that couldn't win for thimselves! It's not like. As for the English an' Scotch an' Welsh Reg'mints, it's not men they has in thim at all at all."

Larry wondered. Some of the others cursed bitterly.

"Aye, Tim Donovan," Flanagan continued, leaning forward. "There's many an officer meself knows, who'd die sudden, an' the bullet wouldn't be afther coming from in front. It would be the pleasanthest thing iver I seen now, if—— Rowl on the siven!"*

And Private Flanagan buried his face in a quart pot.

"Ah!" said Larry. "An' as for that fella, the flag! He shpoke to me to-day. Glad he was to see that I was not undher sthoppages. —— him! I near bit me tongue out of me head to kape from tellin' what he was."

"An' then, 'Anny complaints?' says young Tom, perkin' into the room this noon. 'No, sir,' says old Matthews; an' the mate all gristle an' bone an' cindhers; an' the spuds just black! Complaints! Arrah! There's that long, scraggy-necked, mangy flag that I'd choke the life of, willing. Complaints, is it!"

"Maybe," muttered Larry, "a bullet from across the p'rade groun' from a winda——"

"Whisht! be aisy now! Don't be afther——"

LARRY, overweighed by an ever present sense of injustice, turned his thoughts homeward over the water. He longed for the heather and bog and clear, wind-swept distances of Connemara, where there was no pack drill nor orderly-room to drive a man crazy, nor bugles nor redcoats; where each day was not as every other day and the Regiment could be forgotten. Larry made up his mind to desert. Nothing would stop him; not even the fear of being discovered and dragged back again by an escort. Wherefore he waited on patiently, seeking his opportunity.

When the news came that the long-expected change of station would take the

* "The seven."—The seven years that a soldier serves with the colors before being transferred to the Reserve.

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Regiment to Athlone, Larry Magill growled. This was not what he wanted at all.

"I'VE a brother in Bosthon," had said Private Flanagan; "an' that's the place. Whin me siven's up, which it will be next year, I'll be crossing the ocean afther him."

"You'll be in the Resarve for five years, Mick," said Private Daly.

"The Resarve! 'Tis not likely the Resarve 'ull be hindherin' me. I'm for Bosthon. —— the Resarve an' all in it!"

Flanagan in America! Larry remembered the stories he had heard and wondered how his brothers were faring. And the never quite forgotten plans of following them came into his mind once more.

An unusually riotous outbreak and the cells that succeeded as a matter of course left him deeply rebellious, his powers of endurance exhausted. He would be a slave no longer, but would go to America, a free country, where each man was as good a man as his neighbor.

So Private Magill, making a great effort to attain this end, avoided all social relaxation, even a simple drunk, lest it should lead to the orderly-room with the inevitable heavy fines and stoppages for new kit. Tattoo on payday found him sober, if bad-tempered, while others lay on their cots in various enviable stages of intoxication. To save money enough to take him to America became Larry's one endeavor. Only that, and he would be content.

Larry discovered much to comfort him in the newspapers: long columns of print that he spelled out slowly in the evenings. He saw it repeated over and over again that he was a fool, a traitor, an object of scorn and loathing, serving the enemy of his native land, clothed in the red garb of shame. Which things were discussed fiercely.

"Faith! It's work no dacent man should put his hand to," said Neligan. "The English is always oppressing some one."

This in support of a remark from Larry.

"If 'tis not the Irish, it's the blacks," he continued. "See here, Andy, they're afther fightin' in the Sudhan an' Indhia since three years on ind. 'Tis a reg'lar routhine with thim."

"Ah! May the divil tak' thim! The English 'ull be having a dale to answer for. An' in the spite of Parlymint, which does be jumpin' crazy," said Andy.

Private Daly leaned forward with outstretched hand.

"'Tis blamed hard! Why is it that *we* have seen no fightin'? It's we that could l'arn thim!"

"Bekase, Mister Daly, we are sthathioned at home, an'——"

"Arrah musha! Yis, but——"

"They be afraid to sind us to a war! Do I not know?"

Neligan's face was flushed and he thumped angrily on the table.

"Agypt, Burmah, Afghanisthan, Sudhan, Chithral," he went on, "an' we oursel's niver so much as seein' the shadda of a shcrap."

"Sorra word o' lie I'm tellin', but meself 'ud sooner fight ag'in' the English than for thim," put in Private Hurley.

"Ye would," said Larry gravely. "An' I'd rather fight ag'in' ye, Pathrick Hurley, than on the same side, knowin' what yer shootin's like. It 'ud be as good for you to thry an' git past Sain' Pether as to hit a hayrick at two hundhred."

Everybody laughed, and a man who had not spoken for some time put down his paper.

"Like as not," he said, "they'll be fightin' in South Africa again. I read that the English are afther sthartin' to intherfere with the Boers."

"Ye don' say," said Neligan, the friend of the oppressed. "Pray God, there's a chance of oursel's goin'!"

TWO months later Privates Hurley and Magill sat in their room with a pile of newspapers.

"They're goin' to fight," said Private Hurley, after a long silence.

"If we was ordhered," said Private Magill, "what would——"

"Plaze Hiven, we go! I'm as anxious for a fight——"

"Yerself would go, Pathrick?" asked Larry slowly.

"Arrah! Of course I'd go. Who wouldn't?"

"You said once——"

"Ah, the Lord save you! Did ye b'lieve that?"

And having spoken with much scorn, he took down his Lee-Enfield and began to polish it with loving care. Larry looked at him gloomily, grunted and went out into the sunlight.

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Making discreet inquiries, he found the whole room of a like mind. And Larry listened with horror. These men were traitors. They might rave about the English and curse and threaten and promise, but —if there was a war, their solemn vows would be of no account. Larry could have wept as he thought it. But at least there was one man who would show them. He, Larry Magill, to fight for the English! Larry laughed at the idea. Come what might, he would not go with the Regiment.

ONE September evening, when the red sky was fading to a dim purple, Larry was slowly walking back to barracks, thinking of the day, now near at hand, when he should be on his way to a free country. He heard quick footsteps behind him. A voice called on him to stop.

Larry swung round quickly. A man in plain clothes was running toward him, shouting and waving his arms joyously.

"Larry, ye owld fool, are ye not glad to see me?"

Larry stared at him, unable to believe his eyes.

"It's niver—it's niver Mick Flanagan!"

"'Tis himself, body an' sowl, an' a stomach on him as big as a dhrowned pup's."

"What in the world brings you here, Mick?"

Larry feared the answer, which flashed back at him.

"There's to be a war, me son, is there not? An' meself wishes to be in the thick of it. It's aisy known what's in the air. They've a wee glimmerin' of it across the wather, and a dacent war it will be. An' meself's afther thravelin' across the say to go with the owld Reg'mint, me son. They'll have to sind us."

Larry would have felt less bewildered if the Colonel himself had slapped him on the back and pressed him to drink in the canteen.

"Well," he stuttered with slow anger, "I thought—I thought——"

"Arrah! The divil go from ye! Ye wouldn't have me howldin' back now, when maybe the Reg'mint's goin' to war? I'm like to die dancing at the thought. They'll be wantin' Michael Flanagan an' all the Resarve. An' me afther lavin' a good job on the shtreet cars in Bosthon, on the shance! An' sayin' good-by to me gerrl who was afther puttin' obsthacles in me road! Sure, me shoulders be just achin' for the kick o' me owld rifle."

Larry Magill eyed the rest of the men in his room with smoldering wrath. They were traitors, self-confessed, each one of them. The papers which he read assured him of that.

And then:

Entered a man yelling wildly in delirium:

"It's war, war, bloody war! To —— with Kruger! To —— with the Boers!"

Larry heard the savage, deep-throated roar of delight with glowering brow.

That evening, one fresh from the canteen staggered up to his cot.

"Larry Magill, ye skulker, 'tis war! Why are ye malingerin' here all alone? Is it sickenin' that you are?"

Larry looked at him without expression.

"War, is it? Would I fight for the English? Meself that's a——"

"Eh? What signifies that, when the Reg'mint is to fight?"

"Does it not? There is one that will not go back on his sworn oath. I'll desart sooner."

"God be with you! Would yerself desart now?"

The man blinked in dull amazement.

"You an' me is friends this long time, Larry," he added, "but I'm tellin' ye, there is some that'd be afther thinkin' you a coward, Larry, me man. Which it's more than like——"

He began to unbuckle his tunic slowly. Whereat Larry rose and gave battle once more, with much contentment and profanity.

When in due season the Regiment, eight hundred and eighty-three strong, departed, Private Magill, stupid from the effects of one last gorgeous drunk, went too. He would go, thought Private Magill, but the devil himself could not make him slay the enemies of the English.

PRIVATE MAGILL bore the burden of his own thoughts in sullen silence, and the men of his Company, seeing his black mood and fearing the weight of his fist, left him in peace.

Thus weeks sped by, and Private Magill, one dim morning before dawn, marched forward toward the Tugela, to his first battle.

The men around him were happy, chaffing each other in low tones with clumsy

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barrack room jests. They were going to fight; being Irishmen, they had no doubts whatsoever as to the result. Flanagan, tramping by Larry's side, whistled softly through his teeth.

"Larry," he whispered, "are ye happy at last? This day ye'll see the finest Reg'mint of the finest Brigade in the Arrmy in action. There'll be widdas an' orphans in plenty before night, afther we done with the Boers."

"Perhaps," said Larry, "there'll be the same in Ireland."

Flanagan chuckled.

"Thim!" he said with withering mirth, and thereafter marched in silence, chuckling noiselessly.

The leading battalion advanced in fours, the remainder of the Brigade in mass of quarter columns, as their forebears had done a hundred years previous, when quick firers and magazine rifles were not.

Private Magill shivered when a gun on the hill opposite opened fire, its shell bursting well behind them.

"That's a miss," said Flanagan. "Look to yer dhressin' now, Larry."

Another shell burst between them and the Regiment in front, with a whirr and a crash.

"Outer," said Flanagan grinning. "They're findin' the range, Larry."

And a third shell reached them, shattering the crowded ranks with hideous slaughter.

Beginning gradually, as if timid, later quickening to a continuous roar, the Boer guns thudded on; the sudden deafening crash of the forty-five pounders and field guns almost dulling the ears to the wicked chatter of the Maxims.

Never wavering under the shrapnel, losing heavily, the Regiment deployed to the left in single rank and advanced by quick rushes. Then, pushing forward in open order into the loop of the river, toward the drift, it was caught with the rest of the Brigade in a devastating cross fire from the hidden trenches on either hand.

And there followed disaster, grim and indescribable.

Men of different Regiments, losing all cohesion, mingling together, streamed onward, paying no heed to those that fell around them.

Larry Magill faced the storm helplessly, his thoughts black within him as he dodged forward with beating heart and white face between the limp khaki figures on the grass. He gulped weakly, as, just ahead of him, Mick Flanagan whimpered and rolled over, slain by some unseen hand; never to see Bosthon again or the gerrl who was waiting, and was afther puttin' obsthacles in the road.

Larry passed on, gripping his rifle the tighter, quivering with strange fears.

"God in Heaven, where are they?" wailed a man, kneeling. "Me hands is desthroyed—me hands——" A merciful shrapnel bullet stopped him.

"Come on!" shouted a young subaltern. "Come on, boys! Don't let the Dublins say we——"

Larry sobbed as he stepped over the slight huddled body.

A bullet scarred his face from cheekbone to ear, snicking his chinstrap in two. He showed his teeth in a lopsided snarl, growling.

And Private Magill, forgetful of his vows, his sworn oath, his father's dying curse, knew only this: that in front of him were enemies. Enemies whom he wanted to kill; enemies who were killing his comrades, fellow countrymen, men who had lived with him, fought with him, drunk with him. Private Magill wanted to get at them with the bayonet which, unlike the bullet, could not miss.

"Git on, Faskally, git on, or I'll batther the brains of ye!" He shouted as if in liquor.

More than one man looked sidewise at Larry Magill that long hot day. He grumbled with deep curses when they were held back at the *kraal* near the bend of the loop. He clung to his ground with savage temper, indifferent to the snarling of the bullets, strong in the knowledge that the Regiment would soon be hurled against the trenches across the river. When the reluctant order reached them, hours after it was given, to fall back, he sprang to his feet, raving.

"Who says so? We'll not rethire. Let's git at thim!"

He groped for his bayonet. A sergeant seized him by the arm.

"Ye fool! Do ye want to die so much, thin?"

"Divil tak' you an' yer bag! If we was to die at the bleeding gates of —— who'd care? If it was advancin' we were! But we, by Hivin! We're runnin'!"

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And with a choking sob he turned his back to the spluttering trenches, trailing his rifle in the dust.

Throughout the remainder of the day, Private Magill, his burned face plastered with sweat and dirt and dried blood, obeyed orders, dazed and apathetic. He did not care very much what was happening. The losses in the Regiment left him unmoved. He scarcely listened to the news whispered from man to man in the scorching noontide that the gunners had been shot down and the guns abandoned. It mattered not to him that the Colonel was wounded; he bore *him* no love. It was sufficient that he, Larry Magill, had had to retreat. For no reason, so far as he could see; the ways of Generals and mistakes of cartographers, also a timorous Home public, being beyond the understanding of the Irish soldier who wants to win battles.

"And, God help us!" said Private Magill in hopeless despair. "Was it to be humiliathed like an English Reg'mint that we came out?"

The lowest depths of infamy to Private Magill.

THREE weeks of dull inaction followed. Then a sudden concentration, a dreary march through the mud, more delays, a sleepless bivouac above a drift; and in the thick mist of early dawn a patrol of light horse was fired on as it crossed the swiftly flowing river.

Later on the artillery shelled the Boers out of their cover and the engineers began to build their two bridges, the one for the troops, the other for the transport.

"'Twon't be long till we be come to fightin' now," said Larry, as he climbed up the steep bank opposite.

"You're not afraid of a fight, Magill," said his Captain with a smile.

"I am not, sir. 'Tis aiqual where ye are. Indeed, ye can die handy in barracks, if ye but knew it. At the laste, there's choice company where ye're fightin'."

They could see the Boers digging for dear life on the hilltops, but the day passed quietly save for a few odd shots as the sun was setting.

All night long mules and baggage wagons clattered and creaked over the wooden chesses of the bridge and all the next day, while the troops chafed at the wait and idly watched the ever growing earthworks.

"By Hivin! We take it aisy." Thus Private Magill, who was not in the confidence of the General Officer Commanding.

"It couldn't be that it's up thim hills the Brigade's goin'!" said Patrick Hurley. Then after a pause, "Plaze God the Boers wait for us till we be in howlts!"

"It's all I wish," said Larry. "There's no river to be lepped this time."

"Ah! But it's mobile they are. The Boers will be before us whatever side we do turn in it," said another man, standing up and looking at the clear-cut figures on the skyline. "Well, to-morra, plaze Hiven, if we are not tied to the thransport. 'Tis a circus, no liss."

Which half said fear came true. That evening saw the Regiment on guard over the wagons. But they listened cheerfully to the rumor, too strong to be denied, that the next day would see the Brigade in action.

Private Magill's Regiment, however, with bitter and deep anguish, was detailed to guard the general right rear, and consequently formed no part of the attacking column which moved north.

"An'," muttered Private Magill, as the guns opened, "they've sint the English before us. Blasht their sowls!"

"What's up, Larry? It's queer ye're lookin'!"

"Me head aches like a big dhrum keepin' time to the bagpipes, and I'm shivery all over."

Larry grinned, but Private Hurley shook his head.

"Had ye not betther see the docthor? Meself knows whin——"

"Ah, be quiet now. 'Tis nothin' at all."

And in silence that afternoon they watched the other Regiments, Irish and North Country, extending from rank entire to open order, under heavy fire, racing forward toward the *kopjes*.

"They've got it," said Private Hurley. "But they'll get no further. See thim, poor fellas, in swathes. They have thim bet!"

They saw the leading lines fall and waver under the pelting bullets, and cling finally to the ridge, as the batteries behind opened once more.

All that night the Boers, troubled and uneasy, fired at the soldiers in front of them, lying in the gloom beyond the dull red glow of the burned grass, where the blackened dead lay thick.

The half battalion in which was Private

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Magill's Company was posted on the extreme right, and Private Magill himself was on outpost duty.

It was at this stage that Private Magill and his Regiment parted.

Larry, his head throbbing dully, his limbs racked with pain, lay in the long grass on the top of a hill, shivering in the cold night air, listening intently. On his left was the splutter of the Mausers. Elsewhere all was quiet.

He felt ill and light-headed. Fiery streaks danced before his eyes. He scarcely knew what was real, what not.

Immediately in front of him something stirred.

Private Magill raised his rifle. It might be a Boer——

Very cautiously he crept forward into the darkness.

A star shell burst high overhead, flashing the ridges with a moment's ghastly light.

Larry ran on a few yards, his rifle ready. There was something ahead of him, he was certain.

Then he hesitated, put his hand to his head, and stumbled blindly on, away from his own lines, on and on, losing all sense of direction, wearily, over slippery boulders, into sudden hollows, through cloying mire, till his legs ached and bent under the weight of his body.

And in the gray light of morning Private Magill fell forward on to his face; oblivious of everything, save that he was very tired, very sick and that nothing mattered any more.

PRIVATE MAGILL rolled over on to his back, opened his eyes, yawned and sat up. He looked around him, still stupid from sleep, and with a shock realized that it was near evening and that he was alone at the foot of a precipitous cliff. About him were great russet hills quickly darkling against the orange sky, and gaunt gray rocks, aloes and mimosa trees brilliant in yellow blossom.

He stood up shakily. The roar of musketry from over the farthest ridge told him that the battle was still continued, and that it could not be far distant. He picked up his rifle, pulled down the bolt and slid it to again with a snap. Then feeling thirsty, he unscrewed the top of his water bottle, only to find that it was empty.

With the intention of making his way back to the Regiment he climbed the rough slope, helping himself on by the aid of his rifle. His khaki was torn and stained with mud and grease, his unbuckled belt hung loosely, held up by his leather braces, his helmet was battered, the cover slit. On his back was his can of oatmeal and precious bundle of firewood.

Private Magill halted, his bloodshot eyes glaring out from a mask of dirt.

"It's dhreamin' I am, delirious!" he said, rubbing the stubble on his chin. "Leshen now!"

A low voice came up to him from a dip in the ground.

"'Tis the most disthressful counthry that iver yit was seen,
For they're hangin' men an' women for the wearin' o' the green."

"Faith!" said Larry, "'tis one o' the Brigade."

He took a few steps forward, making no noise on the grass, and looked down into a small hollow.

A man in a smasher hat and big khaki overcoat knelt in front of a small fire. He began another song, singing softly to himself. Larry listened, his lips moving instinctively to the well known words, as he limped down the slope.

"'God save Irelan'!' say we proudly;
'God save Irelan'!' say we all;
Whether on the scaffold high
Or on the batthlefiel' we die,
Oh! What matther whin for Erin
dhear we fall!"

The singer did not hear him. Larry stopped and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Glory! It's clear dead I be, for the lick of a——"

The singer straightened himself to his feet with a strangled cry and turned a scared face to Larry Magill.

"Heavens——" He choked and gazed around wildly.

Larry sat down on the ground with a weary sigh, his rifle across his lap.

"We can get back without throuble," he said, "afther dark maybe. I'm that rotten with fever, through an' through."

The man in the greatcoat passed him a water bottle without speaking, and again looked furtively around as if searching.

"Ah! That's grand wather."

Then after a pause:

"Ye're Irish, but ye do not b'long to the

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Brigade. Is it South African Light Horse or—Thorneycroft's maybe?"

The other nodded, still eying Larry heavily.

Larry shivered over the fire burning brightly in the twilight.

At last the man in the greatcoat shrugged his shoulders and knelt down once more.

"Are ye hungry?" he asked.

"A thrifle," said Larry. "Though I have me 'mergency rhation in me haversack untouched."

"Are ye losht?"

"I am that," answered Larry. "But a blind man could find his way aisy from Galway Town to Tuam with that clatther to lade him."

"Are ye from Galway? Meself's from Tralee. Me name's O'Hagan," said the other Irishman without looking up.

Larry crouched over the blaze.

"Ah! 'Tis a pity the Munsthers are not with the Brigade. They——"

O'Hagan interrupted him quickly.

"Me father was with the Munsthers in the owld times."

THE crackle of the rifles over the hills to the west sounded clear and sharp in the still evening.

"Maybe the Reg'mint's in acthion. Sure it's with thim I should be, in place of sittin' here like a skrimshanker from a blue-molded English Reg'mint."

"Ye hate the English?"

O'Hagan was lifting his canteen off the fire.

"I have raison," said Larry. "The murdherers! 'Twas they that dhruv' me mother to the grave an'——"

O'Hagan spat into the fire.

"Divil tak' all Englishmen. Will ye pass me yer cantheen?"

Neither spoke for some moments, each occupied with his own thoughts. Then O'Hagan poured out some hot coffee, which Larry drank thirstily.

"Ah, well," said Larry at length. "We must be off. There's killin' yonder an' it's not skulkin' here we should be. That dhrink and mate's afther puttin' new blood in me. Are ye rested? The Reg'mint's callin' me."

Larry had risen to his feet, rifle in hand. O'Hagan sat with his arms folded over his knees, staring at Larry's grim face in the flickering firelight. He wiped the sweat from his forehead. "Are ye ready?" asked Larry.

O'Hagan shook his head. "I am not," he muttered.

"Save us! Does annything ail ye? Is it wounded ye are?"

Larry bent over him with rough sympathy.

"My Hivin, man!" said O'Hagan suddenly with a burst of passion. "Are ye blind? It's not ag'in' the Boers at all that I'm fightin'."

His voice cracked harshly and he shivered like an aspen.

Larry Magill nodded and drew back slightly without remark.

O'Hagan went on, losing all hold on himself.

"I had to, I tell you. I had to, I had——"

Larry stopped him.

"Ah! Yer father was afther sarvin' in the Munsthers, an' yerself comes from Kerry. Maybe ye've been in acthion?"

"It's ag'in' the English that I'm fightin', body an' sowl. I have sthud up to their guns time an' time ag'in' an' I shot sthraight. Man, I have no quarrel with the like of you."

"Maybe," said Larry with cold scorn, as if the other had never opened his mouth, "maybe ye're in that same Irish Brigade that we're afther hearin' so much of, but which we have niver yit seen! They'll be apt to get a trate whin we do. It's not mercy ye'll be gettin' from us fellas on that day."

Larry was breathing quickly.

"Did ye get our message we sent you?" he asked. "Leshen! That we'd go through ye with our bay'nits as the divil wint through Athlone—in sthandin' leps."

"It's ag'in' the English——"

"Faith!" laughed Larry. "So you have said."

The words were as a whip lash on the other's face.

"Carefully avoidin' all yer fellow countrymen at a thousand yards," Larry continued. "An' it's the Boers that ye sarve, like anny Frenchman or Gerrman. An' why is it that ye're not shootin' down our fellas now from yer trinch? Ye have great courage, Misther O'Hagan!"

O'Hagan moved uneasily, but crouched down again swiftly as Larry put out a huge threatening hand.

"Sit still an' leshen. Yer rifle's undher me foot; ye'll not need it. I have aten an'

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dhrunk with ye, but I'll be undher no obligathion. An' yer father in the Munsthers! Here, take this shillin'. 'Tis all that I have."

O'Hagan hit fiercely at the proffered coin and it flashed out of sight into the darkness.

The volleys had died away. Only an occasional single shot broke the silence. Larry went on sternly, bitter at the memory.

"Meself might have been alongside ye, one time. To me iverlastin' shame! Is yer father dead?"

"He is not," said O'Hagan, glaring wild-eyed at the soldier.

"Does he know what ye're afther doin'?"

There was no answer. O'Hagan buried his face in his hands. Larry fingered his rifle.

"He does not," said Larry. "God help him! Now, Misther O'Hagan, me bowld fighter, thraitor to yer own counthrymen, have ye nicked yer stock with yer Irish dead? Well, will ye come back with me to the river? There's a few of the Reg'mint that would have a word to shpeak with ye. Will ye come?"

"I will not."

"I wondher ye do not dhrop down this minute with shame. Tell me how long is it since ye've been in this counthry?"

"Since lasht March."

"Howly saints! Lasht March, an' yerself's fightin' for freedom! Lasht March! Are ye not ashamed, Misther O'Hagan?"

O'Hagan licked his dry lips.

"I tell ye now—" Larry spoke gruffly—"there's one way—an' one only. Are ye man enough?"

He tapped his rifle meaningly. O'Hagan shuddered.

"I am not," he said hoarsely.

The fire blazed up and a patter of shots came from the far off trenches.

"Ah! God help ye, thin!" said Larry. "Be prayin' now."

"You'll niver, ye——"

Larry nodded. O'Hagan groped with both hands, sobbing and struggling for words, incoherent and unintelligible.

Then he spoke madly, pleading for life in shameless panic.

"Pray," said Larry, "for it's prayer ye're in need of, this minute. Be sthill! Ah, would ye!"

O'Hagan, snarling savagely, had thrown himself on the soldier, trying to pull him over, fighting desperately. Larry staggered back, wrenching at his rifle, scattering red-hot embers underfoot.

There was a burst of flame, a sharp crack, and a figure rolled over limply on to the dying fire.

"God forgive me!" said Larry aloud, as he looked at the dead man. "His own father 'ud be hard put to it to know him now."

And Private Magill limped off wearily toward the river.

A MONTH later the Regiment again advanced under heavy fire; this time across a railway track and up a hill. They crouched down behind a stone wall, waiting for reënforcements.

"'Tis the first time we're to grips with thim," said Private Magill, doing up a boot-lace. "Plaze God they wait! I'm afther thinkin' that the fellas in Ladysmith 'ull be lookin' this way to-night!"

The stars were shining when in the dim evening the Regiment swept over the wall and joined the Inniskillings and Dublins in that wild charge on the hilltop. Yelling joyously, the Irish rushed the trenches, while the Boers, standing up, met them with withering volleys.

Private Magill, his eyes glittering with he lust of war, dashed through the shambles, his bayonet thirsty for blood. He was one of those few who reached the Boer lines.

When the Irish Regiments, shattered but not broken, drew back sullenly to the shelter of the wall, Private Magill lay stretched on the stones, crippled with many wounds.

FORTY-FOUR hours later there was an armistice, and the stretcher bearers came out to gather in the dead and wounded.

"Poor beggar!" said a small Cockney. "'E's only just kicked—an' right up to 'em, too. See, Joe, 'ow many bullet 'oles 'as 'e got?"

"I dunno. Most like 'e was killed by our own fellers. That's fresh blood. Ready . . . Lift up, then!"

This was the end of Larry Magill, hater of England.

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The Wild Man's Honey-Moon

By Rob Reed McNagny

MORRISON'S CIRCUS was on its last legs, and though those members numbered into the thousands the situation was none the less precarious. A season of rain, cold and railway accidents had all blended in to make a perfect whole of that thing called failure, and to the little group of three who sat talking just within the flies of "the kid show" the future looked black indeed.

"If it only wouldn't rain, rain, *rain*," complained the little man with the soiled white vest and the elk-tooth watch charm. "But what's a guy goin' to do? First a cold streak that set even the bulls to coughin', then them two wrecks up at Bourbon, an' now this. It's fierce, that's what!" He glared out across a sodden expanse of lot disgustedly.

"But can't we hang on for another week, Colonel?" urged Eddie Mack, the lean, wiry, "twenty-four hour man," who had run in for a few hours with the show. "Four stops ahead we strike good territory again. I' got the whole country plastered with sixteen sheets, an' the boobs tell me there hasn't been a show through in three years. . . . If you could only hold on for a week——"

The little man shook his head.

"We got to do business right now," he said. "I'm done, through, busted, I tell you! We're here, an' that's all. Everything's mortgaged, right down to my ticker." He exposed the dangling end of his heavy watch-chain. "If we don't do business here it's all off. We quit."

"But can't we do something?" persisted the advance man. "Anything that will drag the change for another week's stake?"

"What?" demanded the harassed owner. "What, I ask you?"

Barney Mann, clarion-voiced spieler of Morrison's Big Consolidated Shows, discarded his quill toothpick and hunched his camp-stool nearer. The resplendent attire of the show's "talker" looked a little faded and wrinkled under the constant reverses, and his erstwhile jaunty smile bore a trace of weariness.

"I tell you, Colonel," he said huskily, "this is a bum town an' it looks like good-*night* to me. But if we gotta kick in here we might as well make it a good stiff kick. It's a long walk home, an' I got a hundred bones in back salary invested in this aggregation. What's the answer? Let's do something."

"What?" croaked the little owner again. "My Lord! I got *parrots* in this show with

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more original ideas than you ginks. *What?*"

Barney Mann ran a calculating eye out across the sheltered area of "the kid show" to where the freaks were busy setting up their stands for the matinée. For a moment his gaze lingered upon a lanky fellow flitting busily about the Wild Man's cage. Then it wandered back to the two dejected figures at his side.

"It's old stuff," he mused, "but the simps out here might fall for it. Anyway, it's worth a chance." He sat up suddenly, and the smile which had lured thousands flashed across his face. "I'll tell you what, Colonel. Why not let the Wild Man escape?"

Col. Morrison groaned movingly.

But Barney Mann persisted. "You remember the big swamp that runs down almost to the lot out there?" he explained. "Well, what more could a Wild Man ask? With a little head work Chick can frame up a bang-*up* getaway. Once in that swamp we can work up a capture that will get us newspaper space in every hick daily along the line. Get the drift? . . . It don't cost nothing if the show goes under, an' if it works we oughta put the kibosh on this hoodoo of ours."

"I'm with you!" declared the twenty-four hour man. "We're up against it anyway."

"I don't see nothing else," confessed the owner, pessimistically, after a moment. "Anyway—go to it!"

CHICK—otherwise Henry Binkley, the Wild Man—promptly vetoed the plan. He was constitutionally opposed to any scheme which involved so large an amount of running and being shot at as the escaping business. Even the threats of a break-up and forfeit of back salary failed to move him. He was Wild Man, not a quarter-horse, he averred. As Wild Man he would continue to do his very wildest. But as for the running business, *nichts komm' heraus*.

In the end it was the persuasive tongue of the spieler which found out the weak spot in his armor. Chick Binkley cherished an undying passion for one of the Albino Sisters—an emotion which was in a measure returned. Mr. Binkley was as far removed from an Apollo as anything which walks on two legs could be, but the young lady was practical. The Wild Man business meant steady employment the year round, and Henry Binkley was a good Wild Man. Wherefore matters had progressed to the point of an engagement. Into this situation the Machiavellian cunning of Barney Mann insinuated itself.

"You talk like a clam chowder," he advised the Wild Man pleasantly. "Here's a chance for about an hour's light exercise in the open air an' the opportunity to make a grandstand with the little lady. If the gag goes through you pull down a clean hundred of the yellow stuff an' a ten days' honeymoon on full pay. Will you do it?—'No?'

"Oh slush! You gotta 'bout as much nerve as a four-eyed oyster," he finished disgustedly, a half-closed eye on his victim.

Now Chick Binkley had never seen a four-eyed oyster, but he had a rudimentary idea of the limited nervous system of the creature, and he read the parallel. Behind the face which was his fortune he was human; and, being human, he fell.

The preparations were brief but thorough. Just before dusk, when the kid show was at its fullest, he wrenched a bar from his cage, sprang out upon the lecturer, bit a country woman on the wrist, scared two little girls into spasms, and departed howling in the direction of the big swamp.

The escape was an unqualified success. While not in the contract, the slugging of the talker left a stamp of genuineness on the affair which impressed the public favorably. The male population of Sycamore County massed itself on the show grounds. Excited hunting parties were hurriedly made up, each in charge, so far as possible, of a showman with many chains and ropes. One of the "bulls"—to a circus man an elephant is always a "bull"—pushed the now mended cage down to the edge of the swamp, the afternoon performance was discontinued—with*out* the return of admission money—and the falling mantle of night alone prevented a wholesale descent upon the swamp into which the Wild Man had so spectacularly disappeared.

It was in the midst of the owner's loud-voiced plaints to a sympathetic circle of bystanders that a quiet-looking stranger approached. One glance at the white, drooping mustaches and the wide-brimmed hat marked him as a personage, but when he spoke Colonel Morrison found himself listening with respectful deference.

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"You ah the owneh, suh, of this—ah—aggregation?" queried the newcomer. "Ah am Colonel Payson, suh, of the Kentucky Paysons. Permit me to offeh mah sympathies an' assistance in this moment o' trial."

"Er—ah—thanks," stammered the little owner doubtfully. "Sure Mike!"

"I reckon, suh, that Ah might explain a little," continued the white-haired stranger quietly. "Ah have a fahm oveh yondeh in th' hills, an' beside my agricultu'l interests Ah have a hobby. Th' countrymen would tell youall that Ah raise hosses an' dogs. Not just dogs. Bloodhounds, suh! Th' cream o' th' breed in this paht o' th' country." Colonel Morrison stiffened suddenly as if a hot iron had been unexpectedly applied to sensitive parts of his anatomy, and ran a nervous eye over his visitor. "Youall begin to get th' drift of mah remahks, suh?"

"Why—yes, of course," replied the showman uncertainly. And then, "But you understand, Colonel, I couldn't think of anything like that just now."

"Why not, suh?" It seemed to the director of Morrison's Big Consolidated that the white mustaches of the other bristled.

"I can't afford to hire dogs," he evaded uneasily, his gaze shifting in a vain effort to locate the smooth-tongued Barney in the crowd. "But you'll have to excuse me now, Colonel, I got a lot to see to. See you later."

But the Southerner stopped him imperiously as he turned away. "They ah *not foh hiah*, suh!" he thundered.

With a sigh the little man turned back. "Now lookee here, old timer," he said desperately. "You'll excuse me, but I just *pointedly* don't need them dogs. See? That freak out there is worth about two thousand plunks to me, and I can't have no bloodhounds runnin' 'im down an' eatin' him. Alive he's a first-class article with a commercial value; dead, his pelt wouldn't bring much more'n a muskrat's. If you'll just gimme time I'll have him back all safe an' sound without any trouble. But I don't want no dogs to do it with."

"But what of the public, suh? Th' lives o' innocent women an' child'en in dangeh while this ferocious vahmint is at lahge?" stormed the now aroused gentleman from Kentucky. "Take shame to youahself that youall think fust o' youah own intehests! Youall advehtise this creatuh as a maneateh—a maddened brute with a man's cunnin'. By gad, suh! 'N' youall stand an' estimate his wo'th in dirty dollahs while he runs free. You ah a scoundrel, suh! An' Ah wahn you that by sunrise mah dogs will be tuhned loose on that theah swamp an' kept theah until this vahmint of youahs is dragged out—alive or dead, Ah'm cussed if Ah ca-ah which, suh!" And the irate exponent of the broad A turned and marched away with dignity.

"You take your blamed dogs an' jump in the swamp with 'em, if you want to!" bawled the harassed little owner after him. "He'll kill 'em as fast as you send 'em in, anyway."

But with the other out of hearing he plunged back into the big tent bitterly.

"The sign is on me," he groaned. "First the cold, then wrecks, then rains, an' now this. *This!*" And even the report of his sweating lieutenant that armed natives were patrolling the edge of the swamp failed to sink his spirits lower.

THE Wild Man half ran, half wallowed through a slimy, green pool, dodged a snag on which coiled a flat-headed little snake, and drew himself up on a moss-grown log panting.

"Gosh, but that mud is cold!" he muttered. "Fella'd think——"

He paused to search the recesses of the buffalo hide trousers which constituted his wardrobe, and with a little sigh of relief drew forth "the makin's" and matches. When the cigarette was going comfortably he grinned back along the path he had come.

"But at that, it ain't such a hard way o' draggin' down a hundred. And golly, didn't that old Jane squeal!" he chuckled. "I oughta get a raise on the strength o' that getaway. Wonder how long I gotta stick around here."

From where he sat, though he had penetrated scarcely five hundred yards of swamp, the view was primeval. Behind him the dense brush of a willow thicket closed blankly, shutting out all view. Around him a forest of swamp elm and ash dragged their sunken, moss-grown roots from green-scummed pools which trembled with the mournful trill of frogs. Half hidden in the falling gloom, black ponds showed, deep and mysterious, among the tangled roots and swamp growth.

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The Wild Man slapped pettishly at the swarm of hungry mosquitos which feasted on his naked torso and looked about him. In the fading day his surroundings grew every moment more lonesome and repulsive. His one shackle, neglected in the hasty flight, had twisted and rubbed his wrist in an ugly gall, and a sharp-toothed snag had scratched one naked, slime-covered foot until the spot burned like a hot iron. He was suddenly very tired, very sore, and more than a little uneasy as he traced a new path out across the face of the morass.

"Cuss yo'!"

He lashed out sharply at a scout of the insect marauders.

"Let's see. I go up here a little ways, head over for the other side, an' then watch for Barney an' the bunch to pick me up along the pike that runs up that way. Well, me for *it!* This escapin' business ain't what it's cracked up to be."

He lowered himself painfully and waded slowly into the green depths, quickening his steps as an owl laughed somewhere behind him. A hundred feet, two hundred, three. He paused on a mossy root to slap angrily at the winged pests, slipped, balanced for a moment, and went down with a splash into the slime and ooze. He came up spluttering and waded on. A hundred feet farther on he stepped off suddenly into a hole, and when he found breath again it was to waste it in a round, full-mouthed oath of the canvas gangs.

To the Wild Man, the flight across that silent swamp was fraught with all the trials and sufferings of the French retreat from Moscow. A dozen times he went down, ever found again by the swarms of hungry insects; a dozen times his swinging fetters caught, and twisted and flayed the tender flesh from his arm. The chill of the Spring night, too, had taken hold now and he was shivering, while to make matters worse the scratched foot had set up an excruciating agony of pain.

The light was gone. Stumbling, swearing, fighting against the invisible, he felt his way along until it seemed miles to him, and ever in his rear came the faint, wild bursts of music from the distant circus. He knew that out there they were doing business—business his escape had set going. Barney was on his stand outside, the old man was at the door taking tickets, and miles away Eddie Mack, that other conspirator who had helped put him in this hole, was making capital of his misfortune—storing up the nickels and dimes of another day's business. With a bitter curse he ground his teeth and plunged on.

It was near midnight, he thought, and the bursts of music had long died away, when the wanderer caught a gleam of light ahead. With a glad warmth in his bruised and battered body he made for it. Almost at once he found solid ground beneath him. With a "Halloo!" of relief, he went forward at a run.

His haste was well timed. Two strides, and he tripped on a trailing vine and fell. At the same instant his call was answered by a frightened yelp from the camp-fire, and a raking fire of buckshot sang among the trees above his prostrate body.

IT IS an undisputed fact that Chick Binkley was a good Wild Man. In all the spangled fraternity of the sawdust he enjoyed distinction as a first-class freak. Chick looked wild to start with, and when he set his teeth in fifty cents' worth of raw beef and growled as he pondered the high cost of living, there was a convincingness about the picture that sent the curiosity seekers away awed, and left a substantial return in jingling nickels and dimes at the ticket wagon.

But even a Wild Man must have limitations. Chick Binkley was not courageous. As he listened tremblingly to the storm of shouts and the whistling of deadly missiles above his head the Great Fear clutched him. Behind him lay the dark mysterious depths of the morass with its horrors of cold, vermin and lonesomeness. Before him the warm gleam of the camp-fire cried out to his numbing body, and beyond that were the "big top" and friends. But this immediate and threatening danger overshadowed all in his bewildered mind. The Fear was more than human flesh could bear.

As the shouts of the watch party died away in a sudden lull, the wood around them echoed with a wild, weird shriek which marked the supreme effort of Chick Binkley's career as a Wild Man. The watchers cowered at their fire; the owl in the swamp hushed his eerie cry; and half a mile away the flocks in a country barnyard awoke and huddled closer.

Under cover of the hush which followed, a mud-spattered, bedraggled figure arose

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from the roots of a great tree, gathered about it the slack of a dangling chain, and darted back into the shadows whence it came.

THE Wild Man stirred, shook off a straggling bed of damp leaves and moss, and sat up with a curse, to find the morning sun peering down at him curiously through the trees.

His body bore eloquent traces of the night's adventuring. The winged pests had clung to him in his headlong flight; his face and shoulders bore innumerable lumps and bloody scratches to attest their intimacy. The wounded ankle was swelled and throbbed painfully; and the fettered wrist had galled within its bonds until the dried blood caked about it.

But most urgent of his wants was the hunger-call which had begun to wrack him. Chick Binkley felt, as he slowly drew himself erect, that even the noisome chunk of raw beef he had been wont to gnaw for the delectation of shuddering thousands, would taste as manna on this wilderness morning. He was nervously, ravenously hungry.

In his last mad flight from the watchers he had lost all sense of direction, but now, with his senses sharpened by the need for food, he fixed the sun before him and picked his way toward the show grounds of yesterday.

The sun had moved an hour high when the wanderer made out the thinning edges of the swamp. On beyond lay the scene of yesterday's excitement. The thrown-up furrow of its one ring, the heaps of sawdust, and the pile of boards from the deserted "snack stands" proclaimed its being, but the circus had folded its wings and flitted.

The Wild Man approached cautiously. The deserted lot of yesterday held forth little comfort. He had expected little, for he knew the show must be moving, but he kept on, drawn irresistibly to the spot. It was as he cleared the swamp that he had a surprise.

The surprise could scarcely be called a pleasant one. As he pawed his way out of a thicket of brush a half-grown boy sprang up a few paces away with a shrill squeal of terror. In the boy himself there was nothing so surprising, but at sight of the long, glittering object in his hands the Wild Man jumped like a gun-shy setter. In the period of time popularly measured by the twinkling of an eye he was doing a flat hundred swampward at a speed which would have won medals on any track.

By ones, and twos, and threes the swampy vanguards of the forest flitted by him, but he plunged on blindly. He had almost buried his fantastic body in the depths when a charge of spent birdshot, luckily aimed, lifted him from his stride and sent him hurtling into a thicket of prickly bushes. Through these he tore frantically down and through a slimy pool of black water, and on into the morass. Only when the blinding sweat in his eyes and the agony of itching shot grew unbearable did he stop, to fling himself upon a mossy break in the jungle and lie panting.

But the respite was short. The pangs of hunger were gnawing him cruelly now and he looked about desperately. A few feet away he found a marsh-bird's nest and ate revenously. It was as he turned from the last egg that a distant cry wafted down the June wind and froze him.

It is said that no man ever mistakes the warning *bur-r-r-r-r* of his first rattlesnake; the danger call is self-born, instinctive. Chick Binkley had heard *his* first rattlesnake, and since that time had come to speaking terms with the reptile—which was the stock of trade of his friend Bosco on the other side of the "kid show" tent. But though the sobbing, belling note which echoed out of the dank depths behind had nothing in common with the things he knew, instinct ran an icy finger up and down his naked back and he trembled.

AGAIN the cry came, louder, nearer. The Wild Man forced himself to movement, turning a mud-spattered, terrified face backward. A new terror, dwarfing the other dangers he had met, swept across his jangling nerves at each recurrence of that dreadful cry. With a sudden choking, gasping groan he let himself down from his half-submerged islet and spattered weakly across a green pond and forward into the depths.

Hunger, exhaustion, pain fell from him under the spur of this new fear. Climbing, wading, swimming, he plunged ahead, with ever that terrifying sound echoing nearer.

As before stated, Chick Binkley was not a particularly courageous man. But in the last extremity and forced into a corner, even so small a thing as a rat becomes

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formidable. Spent of breath, his body covered with scratches and welts, and the fear of death dominating his every movement, the Wild Man stopped at last and waited. The chase had drawn so close now that he could hear the splash of heavy bodies behind him, and he wrenched free a gnarled club of a root and waded out into the waist-deep depths of a black pool to make his final stand.

The woods echoed with those wild, bawling cries now—one, two, three ringing voices of them; and as he looked a lank, black-and-tan body, with heavy flapping ears and a preternaturally aged and wrinkled muzzle, rose over a moss-grown bank at the edge of his pond, shook itself of mud and water, threw the angular head skyward in a long-drawn, triumphant bay, and then, sighting him, plunged in again.

Fascinated, the Wild Man watched the approach of that wrinkled forehead with the heavy, bleary eyes; as it drew steadily nearer he concentrated his whole soul on it. He knew not the habits of bloodhounds with their quarry but, having worked so hard to preserve the shred of life left him, he was prepared to take no chances. And he took none.

As the swimming hound came within easy reach he poised his club, took a deep breath, and brought the weapon down crashingly between the dragging ears.

He stepped back warily to view his work, but the movement proved unnecessary. The body kicked convulsively for a moment and disappeared in the slimy depths.

With a new-found hope at this first spark of luck, he turned to meet the other two voices rising now on the edge of the pond.

The first of these dogs rose, as the other had done, and bayed, but did not at once take water. Instead it whined and ran along the edge of the pond uncertainly, and the Wild Man found himself hoping desperately that it too would venture in and give him a chance. But his fears were short-lived. Another and younger dog took the plunge boldly and, followed by its mate, swam directly at him.

The two at once rather worried the Wild Man. One at a time, he might have hoped to deal with them; together——

But he had no time for plans. He swung wildly at the first dog; his foot slipped; and the flying club glanced from the dripping flank of the beast, bringing forth an agonized yelp. Recovering himself, he gripped the other dog by the ears as it swam past him and, exerting the last of his failing trength, held the struggling body deep, deep down beneath the surface until it had ceased to wriggle. When the last tremor had left it he released the thing and waded weakly inshore. He watched the younger hound make the bank, slink over the rise and go yelping into the swamp again. Then weakly, wearily, he crawled from his slimy pool and fell upon the bank in a blind hysteria of blasphemy that made the woodlands echo.

And finally he slept.

WHEN he awoke he knew from the inward call that it must be another day. Red-eyed, he stared about him hungrily, hopelessly. On every side lay the melancholy depths of the big swamp, a maze of trees and sunken roots and messy pools. Miles away he heard faintly the baying of more dogs, but the hunger call pressed and he gave little heed to the sound. Instead, he stood and gazed out to the spot where hours earlier a thousand dollars' worth of Col. Payson's thoroughbred bloodhounds had gone down into defeat and oblivion. He knew nothing, of course, of their value, but the thoughts of that victory somehow heartened him as he slowly turned his back on the scene of battle.

It was growing dusk again when the Wild Man paused in the midst of some marshy growth to devour a careless woodchuck which had fallen under his club. He ate voraciously. The uncooked flesh tasted good after his day of struggle, and he was rapidly cleaning it up when out among the thinning brush a human voice spoke suddenly in a clear, "Halloo!"

The Wild Man sat up startled.

But an answering cry came back from farther along.

"Hallo, Bud! That you?"

"Yea!" came the first voice. "Seen anything?"

"No. But Jeff was along a while ago an' he says they've sent the dogs in again down by the mill. Them two yesterday never come out."

"Guess he et 'em," remarked the first voice. "When they goin' to fire the swamp?"

The Wild Man started nervously. To

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fire the swamp? He did not wait for the reply. As he looked about him he realized that the green timber would very effectively smoke out any living thing, even though the water prevented a rapid fire. In a clammy sweat he picked his way out of hearing, felt a path out among the gathering shadows to the firm, dry land, and after an hour's cautious reconnoiter, flitted across a weed-grown country road and over a clover field inland and away from the haunting terror that had been his home.

A half mile away he sat upon a knoll and watched the search party fire the swamp, and as the flames leaped up he burst again into wild, incoherent cursing.

It was perhaps the wildest moment of his wild career. Alone, friendless, hungry, cold, suffering from his wounds, Chick Binkley indulged his bitter soul to its limit.

Where, he asked the night wildly, were the friends to whom he might look for help and protection? Miles away in the midst of a golden harvest which he, *he*, had created. Where was the fair-haired sweetheart who had promised to cling to him? He guessed it was as good as a signed contract, wasn't it? And where, where was the the end of it all? That's what Mr. Binkley wanted to know, and know at once. And when the soft moon denied him answer he grew feverish and cursed Morrison's Circus from the Fat Lady to the zebras and back again.

But the night winds blew soothingly upon him, and his heat died out. At length, hopeless of wringing a reply from the shrouding night, he started inland, tired, sore, and utterly despairing of the future.

Three miles across country he found a little patch of open woodland with a haystack at one corner and a clean, restful smell which seemed heavenly after the dank, moist odors of the swamp. He burrowed his way to a haven in the stack, safe away from prying eyes and mosquitos, and slept the first peaceful sleep of the three nights since his escape.

A SQUARE-JAWED, iron - faced woman, in a faded sunbonnet and straggly, dew-drenched skirts, was busily stripping wild blackberries as the Wild Man came limping around a near-by bush intent on the same line of endeavor.

For an instant the two stood staring.

Never in his wildest moments had Chick Binkley presented a wilder picture. His black hair clung thick and matted about a scratched and swollen face, in the depths of which burned red-rimmed, cavernous eyes, while a three days' beard monopolized the lower half of his visage like a young and healthy trust. The tattered remains of the buffalo robe trousers clung precariously about his loins, but above stretched a mud-spattered, bloody torso which resembled nothing so much as a Balkan spy just out of a Turkish third degree.

Less stern clay might have screamed at this apparition. But the iron-faced lady did nothing of the sort. It is true she dropped her bucket, but only to reach for a wicked-looking hatchet stuck in the strings of her apron. Armed with this weapon, she delivered herself of an exclamation.

"Well, *my* goodness!" she rasped, after a moment's scrutiny. "If you ain't th' wust specimen of a critter I ever *did* see! They said it was awful, but—— Scat, you brute! Don't you snarl at me thataway or I'll——" she brandished the hatchet dangerously.

"I ain't snarlin'," responded the Wild Man sulkily. Suffering had dulled the edge of his courtesy, and as he backed up before that menacing hatchet he had never looked so dangerous. "I'm starvin', lady. Fer th' love of Mike let me at them berries."

Suspiciously she permitted him to devour the scattered contents of her bucket.

He ate ravenously. When the last berry had disappeared, the Wild Man's burning eyes turned once more upon his captor.

"Be you a sure enough Wild Man?" asked the iron-jawed lady at this return of interest.

Chick Binkley modestly qualified his reply. "I used t' be," he told her. "But I ain't workin' now. I'm on my—my vacation."

"Well, I *never!*" exclaimed the other, the hatchet now lowered to her hip. And then: "But what yo' doin' around here, with th' show gone an' th' whole blamed countryside a rearin' 'round lookin' fer ye?"

The Wild Man sat down weakly. Instinctively he reached for "the makin's," his solace in moments of trouble. When his empty fingers came out from the recess in his trousers the whole bitterness of his wrongs came flooding back upon him.

With a soul which ached with the wounds

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of his outward, earthy shell he launched into a recital of his misfortunes which left out nothing.

"An' I'm done with 'em!" he wound up vindictively. "*Done* with that gang o' shell-workers. The pikers! *Me*, the best Wild Man this side th' Big River, turned out like a rummy with a bunch o' hicks sicked on me for advertisin'. Just let me get out o' this once, an' I'll bet I give the first newspaper I can beat it to a line o' dope that'll make old W. T.'s toes curl. Play me fer a sucker, will they? All right! We'll *see* who gets the merry ha! ha! on this draw."

"Listen at that now!" grinned the iron-faced lady, relenting as the story unfolded itself. "I never in my born days heard such languidge. . . . But they ain't all gone, them show fellers. I heard Ed Bush say this mornin' thet they left a couple of 'em over to the huttel t' Rainbow t' keep on huntin'—an' th' show's offered a hund'erd dollars reward fer yer capture."

The Wild Man sat up, interested. His peaceful night in the haystack and the breakfast of berries had done much to restore his normally practical spirit.

"A hundred dollars?" he repeated musingly. "Why *say!* Look here, lady! Listen to me a minute!" And his face broke into the first smile in days as he talked eagerly for a moment.

The iron-faced lady sat down beside him on the log, the hatchet forgotten now as she listened.

"Well I swear to goodness if you ain't th' beatenest!" she remarked admiringly, when he had finished. "Yo' jist crawl under them bushes now an' hide while I go t' th' house an' git some clothes. My pore Henry, that's dead an' gone these three year, was jist about your build. I'll be right back an' we'll have you out of here in a jiffy. An' mind, yo' stay hid now, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Binkley," said the Wild Man humbly, "just Binkley, ma'am."

MORRISON'S CIRCUS had made ten jumps since the day of the Wild Man's escape, and somehow, with the loss of that gifted curiosity, the golden tide of Fortune had turned. Each morning the sun burst hot and blistering over a new lot with new prospects that made the gypsies of the sawdust smile, and each night the ticket wagon, with its special guard knee deep in currency, was rushed to "the flats" and loaded under the personal supervision of the benignly beaming Colonel Morrison. From the Old Man down to the merest "razorback," the show began to look prosperous and full fed, and Eddie Mack rubbed his hands gleefully as he contemplated the fat country before them.

Colonel Morrison, the white vest freshly laundered and the nine pound anchor of the elk-tooth fob restored to his capacious bosom, sat musing just within the flies of the kid show. Outside Barney Mann, the only cool-looking person on the lot, was warming up a promising crowd for the opening of the daily matinée; the six-piece band was rambling spiritedly through a Sousa march; and the cries of the candy and popcorn butchers rang above the murmur of everything else.

Peace possessed the nodding Colonel. With a reminiscent smile he ran back over the past ten days of changes, and he shook his head half sadly as he thought of the Wild Man whose loss had been the turning point. The Old Man had made an earnest and conscientious effort to recover his freak; he had done his best to discourage the excitable gentleman of the bloodhounds, and when finally convinced that no human being, however wild, could survive more than two days of that dreadful swamp, he had offered a reward—safely along in the third day. He had even stood a three-dollar raise in the salary of a certain Albino Sister who refused consolation of any less substantial sort.

The Colonel nodded again drowsily. "Poor ol' snoozer," he mused. "But at that, he was a Jonah."

An odd-looking couple raised a tent flap behind the Fat Lady and came slowly across the arena. The woman was tall and angular and square-jawed. A glance placed her as one of the genus *hick*. But the man was different. Tall and angular, like the woman, his spare features were shrouded and plastered with bandages. Like the woman, too, his clothes were those of the open spaces, but about him clung a jaunty sureness of manner that marked him as different; a man familiar with the things among which he moved.

Before the drowsing Colonel the couple paused.

"Colonel, I'll just take that hunderd o' mine." The stranger glanced about as he

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spoke. "I guess it was well invested."

Colonel Morrison sat up with a start. Nothing ever startled him like the mention of his country's currency.

"Why, who the—— What?" he barked. "Who the deuce you talkin' to, you rube? Huh?"

"I'm talkin' to *you*, ol' timer. An' I want that hunderd. It's me—Binkley."

The little owner blinked up at him owlishly for a minute, his alert mind working rapidly. Prosperity was too new-found a thing to be dissipated in hundred-dollar lumps, to his notion.

"Um hum!" he grunted. "Well *you* got a nerve, Chick Binkley, bummin' in here after a two weeks' tear an' talkin' about large sums of money." He paused long enough for a curious side glance at the woman. "No sir, you don't belong to me, bo. An' I got no money of yours. *Get* me?"

Chick Binkley grew red for a moment, choked and seemed about to say something impulsive. Then he laughed; but the laugh was not a mirthful one. To the Tattooed Man, who stood in the near distance, it sounded about as humorous as a busy afternoon in a shooting gallery.

"I get you, all *right*, all right," he remarked jarringly, "an' we'll have no words about this little bill o' mine. We understand each other. I'll make no reference to the funny things the newspapers along the line could make outa my story, nor my pers'nal notion o' this outfit. You thought you was double-crossin' a simp the other day, but you got a live one this time." He glanced about him, still smiling. "I don't s'pose you want this hurdygurdy attached for that bill?"

Colonel Morrison purpled to the explosion point. But behind the wrathful face his mind was working rapidly. With their present prosperity, what wouldn't a genuine capture with all the stage business properly worked up be worth in additional advertising? And on the other hand, what wouldn't the Wild Man's threat cost him, if carried out? Reluctantly his fat hands found a yawning trousers pocket, unearthing a roll of bills of the proportions of a loaf of bread.

"That's all right, Chick," he began pacifically. "I was only handin' you a kid. Here's the soft stuff, an' I guess you earnt it all right. That was *sure* some getaway."

Chick Binkley took the bill, still smiling. But his companion, passive until now, moved suddenly into action.

"I reckon you're th' manager o' this 'ere outfit?" she demanded aggressively. "Well, I got a little matter t' settle with ye. Le' me have the paper, Henry."

Mr. Binkley produced a much-worn sheet of yellow paper with printing on it.

The lady unfolded it carefully and spread it before the popping eyes of the little man. "This 'ere bill," she began sharply, "says as how ye're offerin' a hunderd dollars fer a Wild Man. I reckon that's right?" She paused to glare at him accusingly. "Well —here's th' goods."

The popular idea that fat people are good-humored is erroneous. Under the strain of this new attack the little showman trembled ominously. For a moment he gasped apoplectically, until the growing crowd of freaks and show folk thought that he would burst. Then, with a wild, frantic roar, the storm burst.

"Robbers! Thieves!" he screamed. "*No!* I *won't* pay it! Get off my lot, the two of you, before I have yo' thrown off! Beat it! I tell yo'!"

BUT the visitors did not beat it. Chick Binkley leaned negligently against a tent-stake and fanned himself while the iron-faced lady fixed her victim with a glittering eye.

"Robbers, eh?" she smoldered grimly. "Well, as fur as throwin's concerned I don't see anybody doin' of it. I'm waitin' fer *my money*, you little monkey."

The comparison, though apt, failed in some way to pacify the enraged Colonel, who was dancing around on his fat legs and calling for Barney.

"*No! No!*" he bawled. "How many times do I have to tell ye NO! If you don't get outa here I'll call th' police."

"I wisht ye would," urged the iron-jawed lady acidly. "I cert'nly wisht ye *would*. I guess Shuriff Holderbaum wasn't my fust husband's cousin fer nothin'. You *go ahead* with th' police, Mister. I'm waitin' fer that money."

Barney Mann, on his box outside, had had sundry auditory hints of the storm within, and at the Colonel's anguished cries of "thieves" he hastily quitted his post and went to the rescue. He arrived on the scene barely in time to prevent blows.

"See here, my good woman——" he

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attempted to reason with the disturber. But the disturber failed to see.

"You keep your hands off'n me," she cut him short. "I'm not your good woman an' don't wanna be, nuther. My money, this 'ere reward you liars offered, is what I want, an' I'll stay here till I git it. Ye can't scare a pore, defenseless woman with *all* yer yellin'."

Barney Mann thought rapidly. His mind attuned to crises, he read the handwriting on the wall, the menace in this brazen-voiced lady with the tattered bill. And since the crowd waited and time pressed, he gently took the little manager by the coat lapels and led him aside.

"You're up against it, Colonel," he wound up a low-toned conference pleadingly. "These hicks 'll tie you up tighter than a drum until you *do* come through, and with those bills all over the country you don't stand one, two, three. Shell out the century, an' let's get the old Jane off the lot and start the show."

Slowly, sullenly, Colonel Morrison drank at his font of wisdom. With a sigh that rippled all over his little frame he once more drew forth the magic roll and subtracted bills from it. With a grunt he passed them over. Then, his anger flaring again, he turned to the cause of it all—the grinning Wild Man.

"Now *you* get back to work," he snarled. "You've cost me enough this afternoon."

But the Wild Man only laughed.

"Not any!" he asserted pleasantly. "I've quit the show business—for good, I hope," he added, feeling tenderly of his face.

But as they turned away a new vision burst upon the scene—a white-haired, tearfully pink-eyed vision with clinging arms.

"Oh, *Chick!*" squealed the vision wildly, as he evaded her groping arms.

"Mr. Binkley to *you*," growled that worthy, the pent-up bitterness of his exile bursting through at last. "You was part o' the gang that framed up on me. Well, you've Dutched your game with me, Lizzie. There's nothin' doin'. I'm done with freaks."

"But we're engaged!" wailed the startled young lady, squirming from the clutches of the barker and diving once more. "An' how about that beautiful honeymoon we was promised? Oh, Chick——"

For the last time Chick Binkley, ex-Wild Man and fugitive, evaded the clutching arms, drew himself up dramatically and laughed them his jarring, ten-twent'-thirt' laugh.

"I've *had* my honeymoon, girlie, an' three days was a plenty, believe *me*. I don't need any more. As fer that engagement, fergit it. It's off. I'm married."

He paused to turn a sheepish eye on the iron-jawed lady at his elbow.

"Married?" chorused the little circle and the Albino Princess as one, and Colonel Morrison fell back weakly on his camp chair.

"Come on, Henry," cooed the iron-jawed woman softly. And while the company stood staring they slipped out between the gaping flies and were gone.

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The Sport of Kings

By Arthur Somers Roche

IT WAS Tamsie, the tout, who told me this story, so you can take it for what you think it worth. For my own part, if Tamsie told me that the sun had risen yesterday morning, I'd want a certified, sworn statement from the people at the Lick Observatory before I'd believe him, and even then I'd have an unpleasant suspicion that Tamsie had somehow forged the paper. And yet, although Tamsie guarded it carefully, and tried to let it never escape, I suppose the truth was in him. This may have been one of the times when it broke its bonds.

For underbred, undersized, underhearted, undersouled Tamsie, from the always moist wisp of hair that shaded his beady, ever moving eyes to the soles of his tan buttoned shoes, was crooked. Sly, furtive, slinking, his acquaintance was not sought by me. And yet, after Tamsie found that I had not come to Florida with the intention of beating the bookies to death, he ceased eternally pestering me with the tips gleaned from the morning workouts, and begging me to put a hundred on a horse and slip him ten per cent. of my winnings.

In fact, Tamsie honored me, according to his lights, by saying, after the tenth time I had repulsed his cringing advances:

"Bo, you're a wise guy. I can see that there's nothing doing in the sucker line with you."

"Thanks, Tamsie," I told him. "I hope you'll save your time now."

He spat disgustedly upon the flooring of the hotel bar. He looked over the crowd of thirsty ones that urged the bartenders to greater speed.

"Time!" he said, "Time! I got so much of it that wastin' it's a charity to meself. Honest, bo, there ain't a live one in this gang. I'm wishin' I'd gone to Juarez, where they bet more than a dime at a time. Maybe I could pick up enough money to pay me laundry bills. But down here—the game's dead; that's what it is."

"About time it died," I snapped.

Tamsie waved a deprecating hand.

"I don't blame you for thinking so after seeing this dog track, but, in the old days when Sheepshead and Brighton and Belmont and the rest of them was going, bo, the game was the big game then. It was the sport of kings. Now—it's the livin' of pikers, and bums, and hangers on, and——"

"And crooks," I snapped. "Tamsie," I went on, "I've been to the track in Sarasota. Was out there this afternoon."

"I saw you," he interrupted. "You had a swell bet down on Neoskaleeta, when I told you that dog couldn't beat a steam roller. If you'd taken my tip, you'd——"

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I grinned at him: Tamsie half grinned back.

"I'm not simple, Tamsie," I said. "Don't you suppose I know that while you're giving tips you really work for a book and receive a percentage of all the losing bets you can direct to it?"

Tamsie laughed out loud.

"Do you blame me?" he chuckled.

"Not if you don't know any better," I said. "But—you call this the game of kings. It's the game of crooks, of thieves; has always been so. It's fostered by thieves, and thrives on theft. Tamsie, I've been watching the races at Sarasota. Don't you suppose that I've been able to see that the horses run for the books? That the attendance isn't enough to pay even the miserable four-hundred-dollar purses the Association puts up? Wasn't it the same in New York before they put the brakes on it? Didn't the real profit come from the gambling? Wasn't the gambling so profitable to the insiders that they had the police stop all outside betting—all pool rooms?

"And they claimed that the tracks existed to improve the breed of horses! Tamsie, the breed of horses was improved at expense of the breed of men! There's never an honest thing come from a race track except the horses, and they, the noblest of the animal kingdom, were but the pawns of crookedness. They'll stop it at this dog track, too, Tamsie. It can't last. To-day I saw three horses pulled. How long can it last?"

Tamsie shrugged his shoulders.

"We gotta live, you know," he said. "But that crookedness stuff," he said more warmly. "That don't go all the time. I admit there's been pullin' on this track, and on every other. But—once in a while a crooked race is run on the square.

"Another thing, too! Men like you, what visit a track oncet a year, what do you really know about the ins and outs of the game? You read the papers, and you think that everything's crooked—in and out of the paddock. Let me tell you this, bo, the men what race the horses got hearts as big as the men what try to stop racing. They ain't all crooked.

"They may trim a come-on when the trimmin's good. But—well, when a man gets sick in business do his pals rig the stock market for him so's he can make a killin'? Do they? They do *not!* Like a pack o' wolves they drop down on him and rip the shirt off his back. But in the bettin' ring—did you ever hear of Old Man Carroll? No? Well, don't give me any of the newspaper reformers' guff about the hard-hearted devils of the bettin' ring till I tell you 'bout him.

"I'm admittin' right here that the racin' game is mostly run for the books; that the public is there with skin and we're there with the skinnin' knives. But it ain't all as bad as the reformers make out. We ain't all so money hungry that we'd cut the heart of our best friend the way they do in business.

"Lemme tell you about Old Man Carroll. I ain't tellin' it so's you'll pin any posies on any of us that were in on it; I'm tellin' you simply so's you'll know that every time a race goes wrong it ain't so's the books'll win.

"Even the bookies has wives and children, you know. Sometimes they needs money and take crooked ways to get it; and sometimes they dig down into their jeans for the case coin, and don't ask any one to put their names in front o' lib'ries, neither. Listen."

And this is the story, the one incident of all his racing career, that Tamsie could adduce to prove that the racing game is not entirely bad. And, as it goes to prove those outlaws from society, the bookmakers, have hearts, I set it down as Tamsie told it to me, though more for entertainment than with the idea of proving anything.

HE COME from Tennessee. But he'd been born in Kentucky, where his family'd lived for a hundred years. Before that, I've heard, they lived in Virginia and was members of them Virginia Carrolls what was aces when the Morgans and the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts was deuces. He was a gentleman, Old Man Carroll was; he wasn't gutterbred like me and the rest of us guys what never had no homes and dragged ourselves up. A real gentleman, just as much as Belmont or Astor or any one of the gang that race horses for fun. Only Old Man Carroll raced his plugs for the coin.

He'd been born on a stock-farm, and breedin' horses was the only thing that attracted him. His family had been in the game for years before him, so it was natural he should take it up. You've heard of the Bluegrass String. Sure you have; they

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used to burn up the tracks twenty years ago. Old Man Carroll thought nothing of waltzing up to the guys on the big stools and lifting both hands, fingers spread, and every finger meanin' a thousand.

Yes, sir, bo! I've heard tell of how he'd go down the line that way until he stood to win or lose a fortune. Fifty thousand on a pet pony was nothin' to the old man. There's been times when Old Man Carroll, at the end of two weeks' racin', could show a clear profit over the bookies of a couple o' hundred thousand. Yes, sir. Seemed like when the old man's ponies was primed for a race nothin' except an auto could show 'em dust—and autos come later. And he was on the level.

He never put a horse in when he was short of trainin', so's to get a swell bet at big odds next time the plug started. He wasn't that kind. He simply knew how to raise horses and how to train 'em. And when they started they ran their races true to form, and the old man would bat the bookies between the eyes until they'd try to dope out some scheme to get him ruled off the track.

But that was a joke. The old man was so square that he was all corners. You couldn't find a twist in his make-up. And he never gave his jocks but the one word: "Win!"

None of this guff about easin' the bird along and lettin' him get a good sweat. Not for Old Man Carroll.

"I've made my reputation," he used to say, "by makin' up my mind that my horses get their workouts in the mornin'. Afternoons they *race!*"

So, naturally enough, any time a Carroll horse went to the post, the public was there with the swell bet stuff. Not because the horse had been burnin' the tracks, or goin' so fast that the jock's face got chapped by the wind, but because the plug wore the Carroll colors.

You see, the best the public ever gets at the tracks is the worst of it. And when the public, used to shenanigan, finds that an owner always runs his horses to win, and never starts 'em unless they're at their best, why, the public dopes it out that that owner is a good guy to string with. For when an owner always bets his own money on his own horse, it's a cinch that horse is gonna try. Ain't it? The public saw that.

Bo, I've seen a Carroll horse, what never started before, go to the post in a *maiden race* with so much money on it that the bookies wiped its name off the slate. That's faith for you! The Carroll colors was enough. And that's the kind of a man Old Man Carroll was.

You'd 'a' thought, after him havin' such a fine string, and winnin' so much money, what with his bets and his purses, that he'd been a millionaire. But he wasn't. Any time some tout was shy the coin he'd go to Old Man Carroll and come away with enough to get the benny and the swell front and the ice out of hock, and still pay the rent and the grocer. And if some poor owner wasn't there with the stuff to grease the palm of the feed man, all he had to do was tell the old man from Tennessee. His horses wouldn't starve.

Or if some gent needed a bunch of extra thousands and didn't want to borrow it for fear he'd have to pay it back, he'd go to a printer and get some pretty pictures with the name of some fake company printed on 'em, and he'd sell 'em to the old man. Honest, bo, when it came to horses, you couldn't fool the old man with the cleverest scheme, but on anything else—the crooks used two hands in takin' his money away from him. One to grab it and the other to reach for more.

Then there was his old horses. Catch Old Man Carroll sellin' them to do heavy work? Not on your life, bo! It was them for the grassy meadows and the bosky dells and the fat on the ribs and sassy heels and all the rest of it goes with easy age. And many's the time the old man bought outworn racers, just to keep 'em from hard work, and sent 'em to his big stock-farm. All that costs money, bo. So Old Man Carroll, while he had a good-sized roll, never was a millionaire.

AND then comes along hard times for him. There was two seasons runnin' when the old man couldn't send one of his horses under the wire in front, in a big race, to save his life. His horses was always nosed out, and the big purses didn't come Carrollward no more. But that wasn't the worst of it, not by a long shot.

You see, he had Tennessee pride grafted on to Kentucky pride, and that was grafted on to Virginia pride. Old Man Carroll would as soon thought of sendin' one of his

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ponies to the post unbacked as he would of committin' forgery. I've known big bookies remonstrate with the old man, durin' that second season.

"You don't want to bet a thousand, Mr. Carroll," they'd tell him. "A hundred's plenty on that crow."

"Crow?" he'd yell. "Crow! By gad, sir, I'll make you eat those words. Make the bet ten thousand."

And he'd turn on his heel and stalk away from the ring as haughty as all get out. No, they wasn't stringin' him to get his money. Although he'd hit the ring hard dozens of times, he didn't owe the bookies nothin', you know. They'd got it all back from the public. They *liked* the old bird.

It was with them like it was with the public. They didn't have to figure on the double cross, nor pullin' jocks, nor nothin' crooked when the old man sent his ponies to the post. It was a case of plain guesswork, coupled with plain figurin'. And if the old man beat 'em to it, they had to hand it to him. He got his money square from them.

So, after he'd hit his losin' streak, and stayed with it a year and a half, and his bank roll was meltin' away, the bookies hated to take it from him. Not that they was all sentiment; there was plenty of business in their attitude. Owners like Old Man Carroll was all too few in the game; the game needed men like him to give the public confidence. Why, there was men in the big ring just wishin' their heads off that the old man would get ahead once more, and quit his bettin'. They didn't want him to go broke.

But wishin' never gets you nothin', does it, bo? No, the old man began hittin' the rollers worse than ever. And by and by we all got so's we could see it was just a question of how long he could hang on. If he could last until the turn of luck came he'd be all right. If not—over the hills to the poorhouse, you know.

But the old man's pride kept him buckin' the ring.

"If I don't think my horse has got a good chance to win," he'd say, "I got no right to put him in the race. And if I do think he's got a chance to win, I'd be a disgrace to the Carroll name if I didn't honor his chances with a few paltry dollars. My horses are the best in the country, sir. I've known their blood all my life. They get out there and run their heads off for me. They love me, those ponies do. Wouldn't I be a cringin' dawg, sir, if I betrayed their love and faith in me by havin' no faith in them? And all to save a few paltry dollars?.. Wheeuff!"

And with that gruntin' snort he'd turn his back on his well wishers, and place another swell bet on a horse that didn't have a chance. You can read the finish without me tellin' you, I guess.

They elected a reform Governor in New York; they slammed in a reform Legislature with him. And the next thing we race track people knew, there was nothin' doin' in the big State, and horses that would 'a' brought twenty thousand at auction a year before, couldn't sell for five any more. It was that put the final crimp into Old Man Carroll.

Seems like his pride was stronger, even, than any of us had dreamed. To get money to back his horses he'd mortgaged the old stock-farm back in Tennessee. And he'd lost it all to the books. The mortgage was good so long as the racin' game flourished. But with New York puttin' a big crimp into it, and with the other States shoutin' the same way, the mortgage didn't look half so good as the cash. The people what had advanced the money were afraid that horseflesh would drop still more. They foreclosed, and, when they got through, all the old man had was half a dozen nags that were only platers.

That's all he had; those nags and the Carroll pride and nerve. Most men would 'a' gone off in a corner, laid down and died. But the old man wasn't that sort. He couldn't breed horses no more, but he could race 'em—if he could find a place *to* race 'em. And from Canada to the Coast he carried his poor little string, what would 'a' only been good enough for the old-age farm in the days gone by.

No, they weren't much, as race horses go. Still, they'd bring home the bacon oncet in a while; enough to pay the feed bills and the railway expenses, and keep the old man from starvin' to death. But not much more than that. The old days when he walked into the ring and scared the eyelashes off'n the bookies was gone—for good.

Not that he wouldn't 'a' bet if he'd the money, but he didn't have it. Leastwise, if he had a roll at any time, he knew that it was needed for expenses. And the old man

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had honor, same as he had pride. He wasn't bettin' what he had no right to bet. For the loss of his stock-farm had sobered him down.

He got an idea that his little string would starve if he didn't look after 'em. It never seemed to occur to him that he could sell 'em. No, sir. He had to hang on to what money the horses won so's the horses would get the best feed. They won it; he ought to spend it on them. And he did.

That's the only reason his bunch of platers ever brought home the bacon. Because he spent so much money lookin' after 'em. That is, a lot of money considerin' how little he had. And he never blew himself to a new suit of clothes in over two years. Straight! Oh, yes, the old bird certainly loved his string.

But the game narrowed down; it hardened, it tightened. The big owners what raced horses simply for the social standin' it gave 'em to cop the Brooklyn, or some other big event, either sold their horses, or shipped 'em across the Pond. And those they sold they sold pretty cheap. So that good horses, birds fast enough to carry big weight in the big handicaps a year or so ago, were runnin' on the California tracks, and up at Windsor, and down in Mexico, and runnin' for purses that their original owners wouldn't 'a' looked at a while ago.

So, you see, with good ones out in every race, it got so that if Carroll wanted to cop, he had to go to some track where the copping was good. His buzzards didn't have a chance with the swell birds that were entered in even the measly over-night events at the bum tracks in the country's corners. The sleddin' got heavier and heavier for the old sport.

And finally, up at Windsor, he had to sell two of his string to meet his getaway expenses. Charleston got two more, and Juarez all but one. Not a purse did he pull down, not a bet did he win, for the simple reason he done no bettin'.

IT WAS fierce, bo. All us birds that follow the game felt sorry for the old geezer. But what could you do? It's been as hard for all as it's been for one. All we boobs have done is live on hope. We just kept on a hopin' and a waitin' for the tide to turn. For when New York quit the racin' game the racin' game went to smash. That is, as far as anything big was concerned. All we could do was wait for the reform Governor to get out of politics. Then we thought the State would open up again.

But when we learned that two of the big Long Island tracks had been sold to real estate companies and were being subdivided into building lots—well, we knew it was over. We all started to make what we could as quick as we could. And in that sort of competition where did a poor innocent old simp like Carroll belong?

Nowhere! That's the answer. Even at the little fairs his crowbait, the last one left of the once big Carroll string, couldn't cop, for some wise one, on the lookout for some juicy betting with the rubes, would slip in a good one under a phony name, and grab off the fair purse as well as the Reubens' bets.

And finally the old sport drifted into Sarasota here, with his one lone plug—to this dog track, where he wouldn't have worked his horses in the good old days; to this wildcat meeting, that's run only for the pool rooms and the books. Bo, it made my heart feel sore that day last Winter when I ran into the old man out in the paddock.

"Well, what on earth you doin' here, Mr. Carroll?" I asked him.

He smiled, kind of pitiful and patient, at me.

"Trying to win a four hundred dollar purse," he said, blinkin' his eyes.

I looked around; there was no one near us.

"Mr. Carroll," I says, "I think, if you want, I can steer you up against something. Something that'll net you the feed money."

He shook his head.

"Thanks, Tamsie," he said, "but I haven't the money to bet any more."

"This won't be a bet; this is a business deal," I grinned at him. "There's a sleeper in this afternoon's fourth race. The jocks of the favorite and the second choice have got money on the sleeper. Can you see the bird lose? Get me?"

His eyes stopped blinkin' for a moment as he stared at me.

"I haven't the money to lay," he said finally.

"I got a hundred that ain't workin'," I said, kinda embarrassed. "It'd be a real favor to me if you'd use it. This is a real nifty play, Mr. Carroll. The books here

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are in on it, and won't take coin on the sleeper, but the pool rooms—zowie!" I cries. "Climb aboard."

"I never borrow money, Tamsie," said he. "Thank you just the same."

And he turned his back and left me. But I knew it wasn't the borrowin' that got him. It was the fixed race. And I ask you, bo, what you goin' to do with that kind of a gent? Nothin'. Ab-so-lute-ly nothin'! I kicked myself because I'd tried to help him. For I got little patience with that sort of honesty.

I can understand a gent doin' nothin' crooked himself, but when a nice little game is all cooked up, and he can't stop it, what's to prevent him from swingin' on behind? Conscience? Huh! Then he oughta keep away from the track. But I oughta knowed better than think Old Man Carroll would stand for a game like that.

Fact is, I happened to know it'd been put up to him many's the time before, and within a few months, too, by men what liked him and was sorry for him. For every one *did* like the old bird, y'know. Like him first chop, as the Chinks say in 'Frisco. And they'd tried to help him, and he wouldn't take it. Lots of 'em, when you come to that, had offered to stake the old man, but his pride wouldn't let him accept the offer.

"I'm gettin' old," he'd say, after thankin' 'em, "and I'll never be any younger than I am now. And I'm a failure. I'd never be able to pay it back."

One-Horse Hennessey, the advertising tipster, says to him, oncet, at that—

"Who's sayin' anythin' about payin' it back?"

And Old Man Carroll draws himself up and looks One-Horse in the eye.

"A Carroll does not accept charity, Mr. Hennessey," he'd said.

Which just about ended it. If the old man was bound on ending his days in the poorhouse, and wouldn't accept loans, and wouldn't dun the debtors he had, nor wouldn't stand in on a frame-up, what *would* he do? What *could* he do? Nothin' from nothin' leaves nothin', don't it? There's your answer.

Well, bo, I ain't much on the blood and ancestry line myself. All I know about my family tree is that I've clumb right down to its roots, and guess I'll always stick there. I'll never fool with the birds on the high branches. But I know class when I see it, even if I'm primer myself. And to see Old Man Carroll, blinkin' 'round the paddock, was enough to make me heartsick.

For they make few fine gentlemen nowadays that deserve to be put in the same race with that old bird. Take it from me, I know. I've known rich sports, wine openers, and that sort, all my life, but they ain't class. Not at all. But Old Man Carroll was. Men like him help a boob like me to feel that his business ain't such a bum one. If the track is good enough for the Carrolls, it sure is good enough for Tamsie. Which is neither here nor there. So, I'll get along with my yarn.

Well, you've been out to the Sarasota Jockey Club Track, and you know what it is. You know that if ever a dog track existed it's that same course. Well, then, think of poor Old Man Carroll, with his one plug, tryin' to make a livin' outa that meetin'. Lordy, bo, he had as much chancet as I have of bein' President.

Not that there was any good horses there, and that his crow mightn't 'a' copped a race or two. That wasn't it. The tip had been goin' around that the Florida Legislature, disgusted at some of the raw work, was goin' to stop racin' in the State. So the insiders was plannin' to get all the money they could in as short a time as possible. You know what that means, eh?

It meant that a horse couldn't win unless it was fixed. How could they do it? Well, first off, if the wrong horse won, he could be disqualified, couldn't he? But that didn't happen much. The jocks were fixed. A horse simply didn't win unless the right money was on him. Then the pool rooms were hit hard all over the country. The books at the track weren't touched, though. Nay, nay, Pauline. They shaved the odds so close that the public stayed away. If a bookmaker took your bet at the track it was a cinch you didn't bet much, or else the horse wasn't named to win that day. Get it?

SO YOU can see where Old Man Carroll stood. He didn't have any money to make him interesting to the big insiders. He couldn't have horned into their play, and if he could he wouldn't have done it, bein' too square. So three weeks went by, his plug runnin' three or four times a week and not even showin'.

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Oncet or twice I thought his old crow would come in ahead, but the jock that was up had his instructions from higher up than owner Carroll, and he'd get tangled up in the bunch, or run the heart off the beast in the first half, or pull one of a hundred and one tricks you know of as well as me, if you've been to the track at all.

And then, in the stable, one afternoon, I meets up with the old man again. His horse had been given a bum ride when it'd ought to've been a sleigh ride for his jock, and the buzzard had finished fifth. And there was the old man, all crouched up in a corner of the barn, his head on his arms. I was lookin' for a trainer, to pass him a word about the second race the next day, when I sees the old man. And when I noticed that his shoulders were heavin', like he was cryin', I walked over to him.

"Why, hello, Mr. Carroll," said I. "How's tricks?"

He lifted his head quick to look at me, and I could see traces of tears in his eyes. But I saw more than that; I saw that his lamps were squintin' and blinkin' right at me, but he didn't see me. And as I looked I saw fear in them same eyes—eyes what had always looked the world plumb in the face. Fear? There was horror in his eyes; more than that, even. I grabbed him by the shoulders.

"What's the matter, Mr. Carroll?" I cried, scared. "Don't you worry about today's race. The jock gave your horse a bum ride, but he'll get 'em yet."

"Tamsie!" he whispers. "Tamsie! Is it you?"

"Sure it is," I cried, shakin' him some more. "What's the matter? Don't you see me?"

"My—my Heaven!" he whispered, awed-like, "I—I don't."

I turned him quick to the light and I looked into his eyes. The rays of the sun was shinin' right into 'em and he don't even bat a lash.

"Don't you see the sun?" I cries, hysterical.

"The sun?" he says. "The sun? Oh, my God, Tamsie—" and he says it like a prayer—"I'm blind!"

"Blind nothin'," I chokes. "You're just—you're just—why, you eat somethin', and——"

His lips form a smile, and he shakes his head, gentle.

"The doctors told me—a year ago," he said. "And it's been comin' on worse than ever the past week. The glare of the Florida sun, Tamsie, has done it. No, my boy, I'm blind."

And the way he said it, patient, resigned and game as a pebble, made the tears come to my eyes, and I ain't the kind to weep at sad motion pictures, neither, bo.

"You hop into a benzine buggy and we go to a doctor—now," said I.

He didn't want to, but, him bein' blind, what could he do? Nothin'. So he went. And a couple o' hours later I left him at his room in this hotel here, and come down to the bar to get a drink. I needed it. For the doctor had been kind, but he'd been plain as day. Old Man Carroll, the whitest gent that ever entered a horse in a race, was blind—for good. And, fearin' lest in his grief he do somethin' to himself, the doctor gave me some medicine to make him sleep, and I'd slipped it into a glass of water. The old bird was slumberin' like a baby.

Bo, can you blame me for givin' this conscience stuff the gate? Here was Old Man Carroll, the straightest, whitest gent that ever I see, and look at him! Busted like an auto that's argued with a freight train, flatter'n a pancake, and blind. And if he'd played the racin' game like the most of us do he'd have had a million or two salted. What had his conscience given him but trouble? All he had in the world wouldn't make a thousand dollars. And he was old—and blind.

BY NINE o'clock the racin' gang was all in the bar. I got up on a chair and made the first speech of my life. I told 'em all about old Carroll, though, aside from his bein' blind, there wasn't nothin' new I could tell 'em.

When I got through Ikey Mendelbaum, a New York bookie, flipped a century note into his hat.

"There's the first white chip, gents," he said. "Who covers it for Old Man Carroll?"

There was a rush from all over the room, but I stops it.

"Gents," I yelled, "do you think the old bird will take it? Not on your life. He'll take a lead pill before he'll take charity. You-all know that."

They stopped and stared at me.

"What you give us this weepy gab for, then?" asks Ikey, sore. "If you ain't tryin'

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to raise a purse for him, what you mean?"

"I mean this," I says. "We gotta slip the old man's buzzard into the fourth race to-morrow. We got to put up a jock that'll give the horse a *ride*. Get that? A *ride*—not a pull."

"But what'll the purse—a hundred and fifty—do for the old man?" snapped Mendelbaum.

"The old man said to me," I told 'em, "that he knew his horse was ripe; that the next race he'd sure cop. He's going to play the case coin! Do you get that? He's blind; he knows he'll never see again; he knows the few hundreds he's got left won't never do nothin' for him, won't keep him long enough to help. Just before he goes to sleep up-stairs he tells me that he's goin' to bet his last cent. Well—he's got to win."

They stared at me. Mendelbaum got his breath first.

"Gone crazy, Tamsie? What you drivin' at?"

"This," says I. "He gets an honest jock, and you take his bets. Let me tell you something. If ever he found out the race was crooked and that we'd handed him the money, he'd burn it up. He'd kill himself, that's the sort of bird he is. And he'd find it out some time. Understand? You're all bookmakers here. But to-morrow you're goin' to be somethin' more. You're goin' to be on the level. You're goin' to let the public that attends this meetin' see one race that's absolutely on the up and up. And you're goin' to give Carroll fair odds. Get that?"

Mendelbaum laughs till his fat sides shake.

"That's a hot one, Tamsie," said he. "We take the old man's bets and see that he wins 'em, eh?"

"Not a bit of it," says I. "Here's what you're goin' to do. You're goin' to let Old Man Carroll, what's been on the square all his life, have one square deal before he cashes in. That's all I want for him; that's all he'd take for himself. Gents, does it go?"

Bo, it went; with a whoop. The fourth race was the softest spot in the whole program, and, if Carroll was right, his plug ought to cop. But now that the old man was blind, I wondered if he knew as much—if he'd known as much, had seen as much right along, as he had in the old days. For, if not—— Well, racin's uncertain at its best, y'know.

And Mendelbaum and several others there seemed perfectly willing to take any amount of money on Carroll's horse. They tried, after the first excitement was over, to get me to get the old man to risk his last cent on some other horse.

"We'll lay it back in the pool rooms," they said. "It won't cost us nothin', and it'll be O. K. with the old gent."

"Not much it won't," I said. "His last bet will be on his own horse, that's certain. Now, this ain't charity; this is plain business. Only—it's square business. The old man's horse gets an honest ride. If it loses—— Well, we'll order flowers, for he'll sure put his lights out. He won't beg and he won't take charity."

"But the plug *can't* win," said Mendelbaum. "He ain't good enough."

"Ikey," said I, "we ain't saints. We ain't tryin' to cop off a special cloud for ourselves by what we're goin' to do. We're just goin' to give the old man a fair run for his money. You know the books have got most of it; it won't hurt none to let him win some of it back. And *winnin's* the only way he'll take it."

Ikey grinned.

"It's the first time, Tamsie," says he, "I ever found myself takin' a bet and hopin' the bettor would cop, but—racin's sure a funny game, ain't it?"

Well, bo, early next mornin' Old Man Carroll sent for me. He repeats, this time cold and certain and determined, what he'd said the night before.

"Did you get my horse in an overnight race?" he asks first.

"The fourth," I told him.

He smiled tired-like. "Well, Tamsie," he says, "it's the last race, and the last bet. I thought, some time ago, I'd made my last bet, but now—I have to make this one."

"And win," says I, to cheer him up.

He smiled queerly and I knew, without his tellin' me, what was goin' on behind those blind eyes. He was plannin' goin' outa this world, rather than stay in it busted. Then he quits smilin' and gets down to business.

He gives me a pin and a ring and gets me to hock them. He gets me to sell every little trinket he has. And with that and the dough he has, he raised about seven hundred dollars. Then we start for the track in an auto.

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It was pitiful, havin' to guide that good old man to the races that he'd never see. But he wanted to be there. He wanted me to read the winnin' numbers as they went up. He wanted to know just as soon as the race ended whether he had a little roll or was a pauper. And he was game about it, too.

But, bo, it sure made my heart ache to see those sightless eyes strained on the track and not knowin', except for what I'd tell him, what was goin' on. And finally the fourth race come on. I'd got ten to one for Carroll's money and he stood to win seven thousand dollars. But he never batted an eyelash as I told him that they were at the post and he heard the crowd yell, "They're off!"

And he didn't say one word as I kept tellin' him the horses' positions. He just sat there, a little smile on his lips, pathetic, and——Stranger, it was awful. It made me want to weep. But I didn't. I just kept tellin' him where Ladibelle, his horse, was.

"LADIBELLE at the quarter by a length," I tells him, my glasses glued to my eyes. "At the half, Ladibelle by a nose. Five-eighths, Ladibelle by a neck. Three-quarters, Ladibelle by a length. Seven-eighths, Ladibelle by a length. They're comin' down the stretch; Ladibelle's runnin' away from 'em," I cried.

And then I groaned aloud. For Ladibelle slipped back, and Sam Bernard, a good plater, was by her side. They were a hundred yards away; even! They flashed under the wire with Sam Bernard a nose ahead.

"Where are they?" asked old Carroll. It was his first word.

"Wait," says I. "It looked like a dead heat."

I didn't have the heart to tell him he'd lost. And then, even as I was wonderin' what on earth I'd say to the poor old man, the numbers came up. And Ladibelle had won! Sam Bernard was disqualified for crowding in the stretch. I touches the old man gentle.

"You win," says I.

Well, bo, that night I put him aboard a train for home. Bound for old Tennessee he was, and the conductor had promised to look after him. He wanted to slip me a hundred for my goodness to him but I couldn't see it. I didn't want it. I had mine. I left him and went back to the hotel, wonderin' how long the old man would live and hopin' it'd be a million years. At the park entrance outside the hotel Sam Bernard's jock braced me.

"Where's my fifty?" he asked.

I looked at him. "Your fifty nothin'," I says. "I promised you fifty if you'd pull Sam Bernard."

"Ladibelle won, didn't she?" says the kid.

"That wasn't your fault," I snaps. "You didn't *let* her win. Get out of here, you young crook."

And I swung my foot at him and he beat it. Then I went into the hotel and bought wine for Mendelbaum and his gang. It was only fittin'. I had quite a piece of their change in my pocket. And it was the first chance I'd had to put one over on them. While they were lettin' the jocks alone I'd been fixin' them. Except for the Sam Bernard jock Ladibelle couldn't 'a' lost if she'd crawled. I tell you, bo, racin' may be awfully crooked, but once in a while there's a straight race. And when you know everything's straight, you can cop a little coin if you fix things.

Now, to-morrow, in the third race, they're going to take the wraps off of a regular sleeper that——

"TAMSIE!" I cried. "You don't mean to say that you tried to fix that race! That you were crooked! That you won money on it, too?"

The tout stared at me.

"Why, do y' think I'm a simp?" he snarled. "Was I goin' to let all that perfectly good coin get away from me? I ain't no fool, you know. What's crooked about it? Nothin'. I ain't no fool."

"No, Tamsie," I said. "Not a fool—perhaps."

Then I went up-stairs to bed. Racing is the sport of kings, they say. Oh, well, I'm glad this is a democracy

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For the Peace of India

By Talbot Mundy

CHAPTER I

Howrah City bows the knee
(More or less) to Siva.
Gleaming knife and bloody hand
Fill her yawning coffers—and
Bring return in rice and *ghee*
(More or less) to Siva.

T. M.

HOWRAH CITY, in the hot weather of '56, was no time or place for any girl of twenty to be wandering in unprotected. Rosemary McClean knew it; the old woman, of the sweeper caste that is no caste at all—the hag with the flat breasts and wrinkled skin, who followed her dog-wise, and was no more protection than a toothless dog—knew it well, and growled about it in incessant undertones that met with neither comment nor response.

"Leave a pearl of price to glisten on the street, yes!" she grumbled. "Perhaps none might notice it—perhaps! But her—here—at this time——"

She would continue, in a rumbling growl, half prophetic catalogues of evil—some that she had seen happen, some that she imagined, and not any part of which was in the least improbable.

As the girl passed through the stenchy, many-hued bazaar, the roar would cease for a second and then rise again. Turbaned and pugreed, Mohammedan and Hindu—men of all grades of color, language, and belief, but with only one theory on women, would stare first at the pony that she rode, then at her, and then at the ancient grandmother who trotted in her wake.

Low jests would greet the grandmother, and then the trading and the gambling would resume, together with the underthread of restlessness that was so evidently there and yet so hard to lay a finger on.

The sun beat down pitilessly—brass—like the din of cymbals. Beneath the sun helmet that sat so squarely and straightforwardly on the tidy chestnut curls, Rosemary's face was pale. She smiled as she guided her pony in and out amid the roaring throng, and carefully refused to see the scowls; her brave little shoulders seconded a pair of quiet, brave gray eyes in showing an unconquerable courage to the world, and her clean, neat, cotton riding-habit gave the lie and the laugh in one to poverty; but, as the crowd had its atmosphere of secret murmuring, she had another of secret anxiety.

Neither had fear. She did not believe

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in it. She was there to help her father, the missionary, to fight inhuman wrong, and die, if need be, in the last ditch. The crowd had no fear, for it had begun to realize that it was part of a two-hundred-million crowd, held down and compelled by less than a hundred thousand aliens. And least of all had the man who followed her at a little distance the slightest sense of fear. He was far more conversant with it, than she, but—unlike her, and far more than the seething crowd—he knew the trend of events, and just what likelihood there was of insult or injury to Rosemary McClean being avenged in a generation.

He caused more comment than she, and of a different kind. His rose-pink pugree, with the aigrette and the diamond brooch to hold the aigrette in its place, his jeweled saber, his swaggering, almost ruffianly air, were no more meant to escape attention than his charger that clattered and kicked among the crowd, or his following, who cleared a way for him with the butt ends of their lances. He rode ahead, but every other minute a mounted sepoy would reach out past him, and drive a lance end into the ribs of some one in the way.

There would follow much deep salaaming; more than one head would bow very low indeed; and in many languages, by the names of many gods, he would be cursed in undertones. Aloud, they would bless him, and call him "heaven-born."

But he took no interest whatever in the crowd. His dark brown eyes were fixed incessantly on Rosemary McClean's back. Whenever she turned a corner in the crowded maze of streets, he would spur on in a hurry until she was in sight again, and then his handsome, swarthy face would light with pleasure—wicked pleasure, self assertive, certain, cruel. Then he would rein in again, to let her draw once more ahead.

ROSEMARY McCLEAN knew quite well who was following her, and knew too that she could do nothing to prevent him. Presently, also, she noted another acquaintance; for as she passed a species of caravansary—low-roofed, divided into many lockable partitions, and packed tight with babeling humanity—she caught sight of a pair of long, black thigh boots, silver-spurred, and of a polished scabbard that moved spasmodically, as if its owner were impatient.

"Mohammed Gunga!" she muttered to herself. "I wonder whether he would come to my assistance if I needed him. He fought once—or so *he* says— for the British; he might be loyal still. I wonder what he is doing here, and what—— Oh, I wonder!"

She was very careful not to seem to look sidewise, or seek acquaintance with the wearer of the boots. Had she done so, she would have gained nothing, for the moment that he caught sight of her through the opened door he drew back into a shadow and swore lustily. What he said to himself would have been little comfort to her.

"By the breath of God!" he growled. "These preachers of new creeds are the last straw, if one were wanting. They choose the one soft place where Mohammedan and Hindu think alike, and smite. If I wanted to make a row from end to end of Hind, I too would preach a new creed, and turn good-looking women loose to wander on the countryside!—— Ah!"

He drew back even further, as he spied the aigrette and the saber and the stallion cavorting down the street; then thought better of it, strode swaggering to the doorway, and stood, crimson-coated, in the sunlight stroking upward insolently at his black, fierce-barbered beard. There was a row of medal-ribbons on his left breast that bore out something at least of his contention; he had been loyal to the British once, whether he was so now or not.

The man on the charger eyed him sidewise and passed on. Mohammed Gunga waited. One of the Prince's followers rode close to him, leaned low from the saddle, and leered into his face.

"Knowest not enough to salute thy betters?" he demanded.

Mohammed Gunga made a movement with his right hand in the direction of his left hip—one that needed no explanation. The other legged his horse away, and rode on, grinning nastily. To reassure himself of his superiority over everybody but his master, he spun his horse presently so that its rump struck against a tented stall, and upset tent and goods. Then he spent two full minutes in outrageous execration of the men who struggled underneath the gaudy cloth, before cantering away, looking, feeling, riding like a fearless man again. Mohammed Gunga sneered after him, spat and turned his back on the sunshine and the street.

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"I had a mind to teach that Hindu who his betters are!" he growled.

"Come in, Rissaldar sahib!" said a voice persuasively. "By your own showing the hour is not yet. Why spill blood before the hour?"

The Rajput swaggered to the dark door, spur-jingling, looking back across his shoulder once or twice, as if he half regretted leaving the Hindu horseman's head upon his shoulders.

"Come in, sahib," advised the voice again. "They be many. We are few. And—who knows?—our roads may lie together yet."

Mohammed Gunga kicked his scabbard clear and strode through the door. The shadows inside and the hum of voices swallowed him as if he were a big, red, black-booted devil reassimilated in the brewing broth of trouble; but his voice boomed deep and loud after he had disappeared from view.

"When their road and my road lie together, we will travel all feet foremost!" he asserted.

TEN turnings further on by that time, Rosemary McClean pressed on through the hot, dinning swarm of humanity, missing no opportunity to slip her pony through an opening, but trying, too, to seem unaware that she was followed. She chose narrow, winding ways, where the awnings almost met above the middle of the street, and where a cavalcade of horsemen would not be likely to follow her—only to hear a roar behind her, as the Prince's escort started slashing at the awnings with their swords.

There were a rush and a din of shouting beside her and ahead, as the frightened merchants scurried to pull down their awnings before the ruthless horsemen could ride down on them. The narrow street transformed itself almost on the instant into an undraped, cleared defile between two walls. And after that she kept to the broader streets, where there was room in the middle for a troop to follow four abreast, should it choose. She had no mind to seek her own safety at the expense of men whose souls her father was laboring so hard to save.

But she got no credit for consideration—only blame for what the swordsmen had already done. One man, a Mahratta trader—half naked, his black hair coiled into a shaggy rope and twisted up above his neck—followed her, sidetracking through the mazy byways of the bewildering mart, and coming out ahead of her, or lurking beside bales of merchandise and awaiting his opportunity to leap from shadow into shadow unobserved.

He followed her until she reached the open, where a double row of trees on each side marked the edge of a big square, large enough for the drilling of an army. Along one side of the square there ran the high brick wall, topped with a kind of battlement, that guarded the Maharaja's palace grounds from the eyes of men.

Just as she turned, just as she was starting to canter her pony beside the long wall, he leaped out at her and seized her reins. The old woman screamed and ran to the wall, and cowered there.

What the man's intention was is doubtful. Very likely he meant only to frighten her and heap insults on her, for in '56, though wrath ran deep and strong, men waited. There was to be sudden, swift whelming when the time came, not intermittent outrage. But he had no time to do more than rein her pony back on to its haunches.

There came a clatter of scurrying hoofs behind, and from a whirl of dust, topped by a rose-pink pugree, a steel blade swooped down on her and him. A surge of brown, and pink, and cream, and a dozen rainbow tints flashed past her; a long boot brushed her saddle on the off side.

There was a sickening sound as something hard swished and whicked home; her pony reeled from the shock of a horse's shoulder, and, none too gently, none too modestly, the Prince with the aigrette and the handsome face reined in on his horse's haunches and saluted her.

There was blood, becoming dull brown in the dust between them. He shook his saber, and the blood dripped from it. Then he held it outstretched, and a horseman wiped it, and he returned it with a clang.

"The sahiba's servant!" he said magnificently, making no motion to let her pass, but twisting with his sword hand at his waxed mustache, and smiling darkly.

She looked down between them, at the thing that but a minute since had lived, and loved perhaps as well as hated.

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"SHAME on you, Jaimihr sahib!" she said, shuddering. A year ago she would have fallen from her pony in a swoon, but one year of Howrah and its daily horrors had so hardened her that she could look, and loathe, without the saving grace of losing consciousness.

"The shame would have been easier to realize, had I taken more than one stroke!" Jaimihr answered irritably, still blocking the way on his great horse, still twisting at his mustache point, still looking down at her through eyes that blazed a dozen accumulated centuries' store of lawless ambition. He was proud of that backhanded swipe of his, that would cleave a man each time at one blow from shoulder joint to ribs, severing the backbone. A woman of his own race would have been singing songs in praise of him and his skill in swordsmanship already; but no woman of his own race would have looked him in the eye like that and dared him, nor have done what Rosemary did next. She leaned over, switched his charger with her little whip, and slipped past him.

He swore, deeply and fiercely, as he spurred, and wheeled, and cantered after her. His great stallion could overhaul her pony in a minute, going stride for stride; the wall was more than two miles long, with no break in it other than locked gates; there was no hurry. He watched her through half closed, glowering, appraising eyes as he cantered in her wake, admiring the frail, slight figure in the gray cotton habit, and bridling his desire to make her—seize her reins, and halt, and make her—admit him master of the situation.

As he reached her stirrup, she reined in and faced him, after one hurried glance that told her her duenna had failed her. The old woman was invisible.

"Will you leave that body to lie there in the dust and sun?" she asked indignantly.

"I am no vulture, or jackal, or hyena, sahiba!" he smiled. "I do not eat carrion."

He seemed to think that that was a very good retort, for he showed his wonderful white teeth until his handsome face was the epitome of self-satisfied amusement. His horse blocked the way again, and all retreat was cut off, for his escort were behind her, and three of them had ridden to the right, outside the row of trees, to cut off possible escape in that direction.

"Was it not well that I was near, sahiba? Would it have been better to die at the hands of a Mahratta of no caste?"

"——Than to see blood spilt—than to be beholden to a murderer? Infinitely better! There was no need to kill that man; I could have quieted him. Let me pass, please, Jaimihr sahib!"

He reined aside; but if she thought that cold scorn or hot anger would either of them quell his ardor, she had things reversed. The less she behaved as a native woman would have done, the more she flouted him, the more enthusiastic he became.

"Sahiba!"

He trotted beside her, his great horse keeping up easily with her pony's canter.

"I have told you oftener than once that I make a good friend and a bad enemy."

"And I have answered oftener than once that I do not need your friendship, and am not afraid of you. You forget that the British Government will hold your royal brother liable for my safety and my father's."

"You, too, overlook certain things, sahiba."

He spoke evenly, with a little space between each word. With the dark look that accompanied it, with the blood barely dry yet on the dusty road behind, his speech was not calculated to reassure a slip of a girl, gray-eyed or not, stiff-chinned or not, borne up or not by Scots enthusiasm for a cause.

"This is a native State. My brother rules. The British——"

"Are near enough, and strong enough, to strike, and to bring you and your brother to your knees if you harm me!" she retorted. "You forget. When the British Government gives leave to missionaries to go into a native State, it backs them up with a strong arm!"

"You build too much on the British and my brother, sahiba! Listen. Howrah is as strong as I am, and no stronger. Had he been stronger, he would have slain me long ago. The British are——"

He checked himself, and trotted beside her in silence for a minute. She affected complete indifference; it was as if she had not heard him. If she could not be rid of him, she at least knew how to show him his utter unimportance in her estimation.

"Have you heard, sahiba, of the Howrah treasure? Of the rubies? Of the pearls? Of the emeralds? Of the bars of gold? It

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is foolishness, of course; we who are modern-minded see the crime of hoarding all that wealth, and adding to it, for twenty generations. Have you heard of it, sahiba?"

"Yes!" she answered savagely, switching at his charger again, to make him keep his distance. "You have told me of it twice. You have told me that you know where it is, and you have offered to show it to me. You have told me that you, and your brother Maharaja Howrah, and the priests of Siva are the only men who know where it is, and you lust for that treasure. I can see you lust!

"You think that I lust too, and you make a great mistake, Jaimihr sahib. You see, I remember what you have told me. Now, go away and remember what I tell you. I care for you, and for your treasure exactly that!" She hit Jaimihr's charger with all her might, and at the sting of the little whip the beast leaped clear of the road before the Raja's brother could rein him in.

AGAIN her effort to destroy his admiration for her had directly the opposite effect. He swore, and he swore vengeance; but he swore, too, that there was no woman in the East so worth a Prince's while as this one, who dared flout him with her riding-whip before his men!

"Sahiba!" he said, sidling close to her again, and bowing in the saddle in mock cavalier humility. "The time will come when your Government and my brother, who—at present!—is Maharaja Howrah, will be of little service to you. Then, perhaps, you may care to recall my promise to load all the jewels you can choose out of the treasure house on you. Then, perhaps, you may remember that I said, 'A throne is better than a grave, sahiba.' Or else——"

"Or else what, Jaimihr sahib?"

She reined again, and wheeled about, and faced him—pale, trembling a little, looking very small and frail beside him on his great warhorse, but not flinching under his gaze for a single second.

"Or else, sahiba—— I think you saw me slay the Mahratta? Do you think that I would stop at anything, to accomplish what I had set out to do? See, sahiba. There is a little blood there on your jacket. Let that be for a pledge between us—for a sign—for a token of my oath that on the day I am Maharaja Howrah, you are Maharanee—mistress of all the jewels in the treasure house!"

She shuddered. She did not look to find the blood; she took his word for that, if for nothing else.

"I wonder you dare tell me that you plot against your brother!" It was more a thought, spoken aloud, than a statement or a question.

"I would be very glad if you would warn my brother!" he answered her; and she knew like a flash, and on the instant, that what he said was true. She had been warned before she came to bear no tales to any one. No Oriental would believe the tale, coming from her. The Maharaja would arrest her promptly, glad of the excuse to vent his hatred of Christian missionaries. Jaimihr would attempt a rescue; it was common knowledge that he plotted for the throne. There would be instant civil war, in which the British Government would perforce back up the alleged protector of a defenseless woman. There would be a new Maharaja, then, in a little while, and in all likelihood she would have disappeared forever while the war raged, leaving behind her nothing but a circumstantial story of her death from natural causes.

She did not answer. She stared back at him, and he smiled down at her, twisting at his mustache.

"Think!" he said, nodding. "A throne, sahiba, is considerably better than a grave!"

Then he wheeled like a sudden dust devil, and decamped in a cloud of dust, followed at full pelt by his clattering escort. She watched their horses leap one after the other the corpse of the Mahratta, that lay by the corner where it fell; and she saw the last of them go clattering, whirling up the street through the bazaar. The old hag rose out of a shadow and trotted after her again, as she turned and rode on, pale-faced and crying now a little, to the little begged school place where her father tried to din the alphabet into a dozen low caste fosterlings.

"Father!" she cried, and she all but fell out of the saddle into his arms, as the tall, lean Scotsman came to the door to meet her, and stood blinking in the sunlight. "Father, I've seen another man killed! I've had another scene with Jaimihr! I can't endure it! I—I——Oh, why did I ever come?"

"I don't know, dear," he answered. "But you *would* come, wouldn't you!"

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CHAPTER II

'Twixt loot and law, 'tween creed and caste,
Through slough a people wallows,
To where we choose our road at last;
I choose the Right—who follows?

T. M.

HEMMED in amid the stifling stench and babel of the caravansary, secluded by the very denseness of the many-minded swarm, Mohammed Gunga and five other Rajputs—all six, according to their turbans, Rangars—that is, followers of Islam—discussed matters that appeared to bring them little satisfaction.

They sat together in a dark, low-ceilinged room. Its open door—it was far too hot to close anything that admitted air—gave straight on to the street. The one big window opened on a courtyard, where a pair of gamecocks fought in and out between the restless legs of horses, while a yelling horde betted on them. On a heap of grass fodder in a corner of the yard an all but naked expert in harmony thumped a skin tomtom with his knuckles, while at his feet the own blood brother to the screech owls wailed of Hell's torments on a wind instrument.

Din, glamour, stink, incessant movement, interblended poverty and riches rubbing shoulders—noisy self interest side by side with introspective reverie, where stray priests nodded in among the traders—many-peopled India surged in miniature between the four hot walls, and through the passage to the overflowing street, changeable and unexplainable in ever moving flux, but more conservative in spite of it than the very rocks she rests on; India, who is sister to Aholibah, and mother of all fascination.

In that room with the long window, low-growled, the one thin thread of clear-sighted unselfishness was reeling out, to very slight approval. Mohammed Gunga paced the floor and kicked his toes against the walls, as he turned at either end, until his spurs jingled, and looked with blazing dark brown eyes from one man to the other.

"What good ever came of listening to our priests?" he asked. "All our priests are alike. They all preach peace, and goad the lust that breeds war and massacre. Does a priest serve any but himself? Since when? There will come this rising that the priests speak of—yes! Of a truth, there will, for the priests will see to it! There is a padre sahib here in Howrah, now, for the Hindu priests to whet their hate on. You saw his daughter ride past here? There is a pile of tinder ready here and now, and any fool of a priest can make a spark! There will be a rising, and a big one!"

"There will! Of a truth, there will!"

Alwa, his cousin, crossed one leg above the other with a clink of spurs and scabbard. He had no objection to betraying interest, but declined for the present to betray his hand.

"There will be a blood-letting that will do no harm to us Rajputs!" said another man, whose eyes gleamed from the darkest corner. He, too, clanked his scabbard as if the sound were an obligato to his thoughts. "Sit still and say nothing is my advice; we will be all ready to help ourselves when the hour comes!"

"It is this way," said Mohammed Gunga, standing straddle-legged to face all five of them, with his back to the window. He stroked his black beard upward with one hand, and fingered with the other at his saber hilt. "Without aid when the hour does come, the English will be smashed, worn down, starved out, surrounded, stamped out, annihilated—so!" The Rajput stamped with his heel descriptively on the hard earth floor. "And then, what?"

"Then, the plunder!" said Alwa, showing a double row of wonderful white teeth. The other four grinned like his reflections.

"Aye, there will be plunder—for the priests! And we Rajputs will have new masters over us! Now, as things are, we have honorable men. They are fools, for any man is a fool who will not see and understand the signs. But they are honest. They ride straight. They look us straight between the eyes, and speak truth, and fear nobody. Will the Hindu priests, who will rule India afterward, be thus? Nay! Here is one sword for the British when the hour comes!"

"I have yet to see a Hindu priest rule me, or plunder me," said Alwa with a grin.

"You will live to see it," said Mohammed Gunga. "Truly you will live to see it, unless you throw your weight into the other scale. What are we Rajputs without a leader whom we all trust? What have we ever been?"

He swung on his heels suddenly, angrily, and began to pace the floor again; then stopped.

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"Divided, and again subdivided, one-fifth Mohammedan and four-fifths Hindu, clan within clan, and each against the other—do we own Rajputana? Nay! Do we rule it? Nay! What were we until Cunnigan Bahadur came?"

"Ah!"

All five men rose with a clank, in honor to the memory of that man.

"Cunnigan Bahadur! Show us such another man as he was, and I and mine ride at his back!" said Alwa. "Not all the English are like Cunnigan! A Cunnigan could have five thousand men the minute that he asked for them."

"Am I a wizard? Can I cast spells, and bring dead men's spirits from the dead again? I know of no man to take his place," said Mohammed Gunga sadly.

HE WAS the poorest of them, but they were all comparatively speaking poor men, for the long peace had told its tale on a race of men who are first gentlemen, then soldiers; and last, least of all, and only as a last resource, landed proprietors. The British, for whom they had often fought because that way honor seemed to lie, had impoverished them afterward by passing and enforcing *zemindar* laws that lifted nine-tenths of the burden from the necks of starving tenants. The new law was just, as the Rajputs grudgingly admitted, but it pinched their pockets sadly; like the old-time English squires, they would give their best blood and their last rackrent-wrung rupee for the cause that they believed in, but they resented interference with the rackrents!

Mohammed Gunga had had influence enough with these five landlord relations of his to persuade them to come and meet him in Howrah City to discuss matters. The mere fact that he had thought it worth his while to leave his own little holding in the North had satisfied them that he would be well worth listening to, for no man rode all that distance on an empty errand. But they needed something more than words before they pledged the word that no Rajput gentleman will ever break.

"Find us a Cunnigan, bring him to us, prove him to us—and if a blade worth having from end to end of Rajputana is not at his service, I myself will gut the Hindu owner of it! That is my given word!" said Alwa.

"He had a son," said Mohammed Gunga quietly.

"True. Are all sons like their fathers? Take Maharaja Howrah here; his father was a man with whom any soldier might be proud to pick a quarrel. The present man is afraid of his own shadow on the wall, divided between love for the treasure chests he dare not broach, and fear of a brother he dare not kill. He is priest-ridden, priest-taught, and fit to be nothing but a priest. Who knows how young Cunnigan will shape? Where is he? Overseas yet? He must prove himself as his father did, before he can hope to lead a voluntary regiment of horse."

"Then Cunnigan Bahadur's watchword, 'For the Peace of India,' is dead—died with him?" asked Mohammed Gunga. "We are each for our own again?"

"I have spoken!" answered Alwa.

As the biggest clan chief left on all that countryside he had a right to speak before the others, and he knew that what he said would carry weight when they had all ridden home again, and the report had gone abroad in ever widening rings.

"If the English can hold India, let them!" he continued. I will not fight against them, for they are honest men for all their madness. If they can not, then I am for Rajputana, not India. India may burn or rot or burst to pieces, so long as Rajputana stands! But—" he paused a moment, looked at each man in turn, and tapped his saber hilt—"if a Cunnigan Bahadur were among us, a man whom I could trust to lead me and mine and every man, I would lend him my sword for the sheer honor of helping him hack truth out of corruption! I have nothing more to say."

"One word more, cousin," said Mohammed Gunga. "I was Rissaldar in Cunnigan Bahadur's regiment of horse. There was more than mere discipline between us. I ate his salt. Once, when he might have saved himself the trouble without any daring to reproach him, he risked his own life, and a troop, and his reputation, to save a woman of my family from capture, and something worse. There was never a Rajput, or any other native woman, wronged while he was with us."

"Well?"

"I am no friend of Christian priests—of padres. But——"

"She who rode by just now? What, then?"

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"I ride northward, now, and then very likely south again. I can do nothing in the matter; yet, were he in my shoes, and she a native woman at the mercy of the troops, Cunnigan Bahadur would have assigned a guard for her."

"Ho! So I am thy sepoy?" sneered Alwa, standing sidewise, looking sidewise, and throwing out his chest. "I am to do thy bidding, guarding stray padres (he spoke the word as if it were a bad taste he was spitting from his mouth) and herding women without *purdah*, while thou ridest on assignations Allah knows where? Since when?"

"I have yet to refuse to guard thy back, or thy good name, Alwa." Mohammed Gunga eyed him straight, and thrust his hilt out. "The woman is nothing to me—the padre sahib less. It is because of the debt I owe to Cunnigan that I ask this favor."

"Oh! It is granted. Should she appeal to me, I will rip Howrah into rags and burn this city to protect her if need be! She must first ask, though, even as thou didst."

MOHAMMED GUNGA saluted him, bolt upright as a lance, and without the slightest change in his expression.

"Thy word is sufficient, cousin!"

Alwa returned his salute, and raised his voice in a gruff command. A *sais* outside the window woke as if struck by a stick, leaped to his feet, and passed the order on. A dozen horses clattered in the courtyard and filed through the arched passage to the street. Alwa mounted. The others, each with his escort, followed suit, and a moment later, with no further notice of one another; but with as much pomp and noise as if they owned the whole of India, the five rode off, each on his separate way through the scattering crowd.

Then Mohammed Gunga called for his own horse and the one-armed man of his own race who acted as squire to him.

"Did any overhear our talk?" he asked.

"No, sahib."

"Not the *sais*, even?"

"No, sahib. He slept."

"He awoke most suddenly, and at not much noise."

"For that reason I know he slept, sahib. Had he been pretending, he would have wakened slowly."

"Thou art no idiot!" said Mohammed Gunga. "Wait here until I return, and lie a few lies if any ask thee why we six came together, and of what we spoke."

Then he mounted and rode off slowly, picking his way through the throng much more cautiously and considerately than his relatives had done, though not, apparently, because he loved the crowd. He used some singularly biting insults to help clear the way, and frowned as if every other man he looked at were either an assassin, or—what a good Mohammedan considers worse—an infidel. He reached the long brick wall at last, broke into a canter, scattered the pariah dogs that were nosing and quarreling about the corpse of the Mahratta, and drew rein fifteen minutes later by the door of the tiny school place that Miss McClean had entered.

CHAPTER III

For service truly rendered, and for duty dumbly done—
For men who neither tremble nor forget—
There is due reward, my henchman; there is honor to be won.
There are watch and ward and danger greater yet.
T. M.

NO SOUND came from within the schoolhouse. The little building, coaxed from a grudging Maharaja, seemed to strain for light and air between two overlapping, high-walled brick warehouses. Before the door, in a spot where the scorching sunrays came but fitfully between a mesh of fast decaying thatch, the old hag who had followed Rosemary McClean lay snoozing, muttering to herself, and blinking every now and then as a street dog blinks at the passers-by. She took no notice of Mohammed Gunga until he swore at her.

"*Miss sahib hai?*" he growled. The woman jumped up in a hurry and went inside. A moment later, Rosemary McClean stood framed in the doorway—in her cotton riding-habit still, very pale, evidently frightened at the summons; but strangely, almost ethereally, beautiful. Her wealth of chestnut hair was loosely coiled above her neck, as if she had been caught in the act of dressing it. She looked like the wan, wasted spirit of human pity; he, like a great, grim war-god.

"Salaam, Miss Maklin sahib!"

He dismounted as he spoke, and stood at attention; then stared truculently—too

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inherently chivalrous to deny her civility; he would have cut his throat as soon as address her from horseback while she stood—and too contemptuous of her father's calling to be more civil than he deemed in keeping with his honor.

"Salaam, Mohammed Gunga." She seemed very much relieved, although doubtful yet. "Not letters again?"

"No, Miss sahib. I am no mail carrier! I brought those letters as a favor to Franklin sahib at Peshawur; I was coming hither, and he had no man to send. I will take letters, since I am now going, if there are letters ready; I ride to-night."

"Thank you, Mohammed Gunga. I have letters for England. They are not yet sealed. May I send them to you before you start?"

"I will send my man for them. Also, Miss Maklin sahib," (Heavens, how much cleaner and better that sounded than the Prince's ironical 'sahiba'!),"if you wish it, I will escort you to Peshawur, or to any city between here and there."

"But—but why?"

"I saw Jaimihr. I know Jaimihr."

"And——"

"And this is no place for a padre, or for the daughter of a padre."

What he said was true, but it was also insolent, said insolently.

"Mohammed Gunga sahib, what are those ribbons on your breast?" she asked him.

He glanced down at them, and his expression changed a trifle; it was scarcely perceptible, but underneath his fierce mustache the muscles of his mouth stiffened.

"They are medal-ribbons—for campaigns," he answered.

"Three—four—five! Then you were a soldier a long time? Did you—did you desert your post when there was danger?"

He flushed and raised his hand as if about to speak.

"Or did people insult you when you chose to remain on duty?"

"Miss sahib, I have not insulted you," said Mohammed Gunga. "I came here for another purpose."

"You came, very kindly, to ask whether there were letters. Thank you, Mohammed Gunga sahib, for your courtesy. There are letters, and I will give them to your man, if you will be good enough to send him for them."

He still stood there, staring at her with eyes that did not blink. He was too much of a soldier to admit himself at a loss what to say, yet he had no intention of leaving Howrah without saying it, for that, too, would have been unsoldierly.

"THE reason why your countrymen have found men of this land before now to fight for them—one reason, at least," he said gruffly, "is that hitherto they have not meddled with our religions. It is not safe. It would be better to come away, Miss sahib."

"Would you like to say that to my father? He is——"

"Allah forbid that I should argue with him! I spoke to you, on your account."

"You forget, I think," she answered him gently, "that we had permission from the British Government to come here; it has not been withdrawn. We are doing no harm here—trying only to do good. There is always danger when——"

"I would speak of that," he interrupted. "You will not come away?"

She shook her head.

"Your father could remain."

She shook her head again.

"I stay with him," she answered.

"At present Jaimihr is the danger, Miss sahib; but I think that at present he will dare do nothing. The Maharaja dare do nothing either, yet. Should either of them make a move to interfere with you, it would not be safe to appeal to the other one. You will not understand, but it is so. In that event, there is a way to safety of which I would warn you."

"Thank you, Mohammed Gunga. What is it?"

"There are men about a day's ride away from here who are to be depended on—by you at least—under all circumstances. Is that old woman to be trusted?"

"How should I know?" she smiled. "I believe she is fond of me."

"That should be enough. I would like, if the Miss sahib will permit, to speak with her."

At a word from Miss McClean the old hag came out into the sun again, and blinked at the Rajput, very much afraid of him. Mohammed Gunga saluted Miss McClean, swore at the old woman, pointed a wordless order with his right arm, watched her shuffle half a hundred yards upstreet,

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followed her, and growled at her for about five minutes, while she nodded. Finally, he drew from the pocket of his crimson coat a small handful of gold mohurs—fat, dignified coins, that glittered—and held them out toward her with an air as if they meant nothing to him, positively nothing. Her eyes gleamed. He let her take a good look at the money before replacing it; then tossed her a silver quarter-rupee piece, saluted Miss McClean again—for she was watching the pantomime from the doorway—mounted, and rode off, his back looking like the back of one who has neither care nor fear nor master.

At the caravansary his squire came running out to hold his stirrup.

"Picket the horse in the yard," said Mohammed Gunga. "Then find me another servant, and bring him to me in the room here."

"Another servant? But, sahib——"

"I said another servant! Has deafness overcome thee?"

He used a word in the dialect which left no room for doubt as to his meaning; it was to be a different servant, a substitute for the squire he had already. The squire bowed his head in disciplined obedience and led the horse away.

An hour later—evening was drawing on—he came back, followed by a somewhat ruffianly-looking half-breed Rajput-Punjabee. The new man was rather ragged, and lacked one eye; but with the single eye he had he looked straight at his prospective master. Mohammed Gunga glared at him, but the man did not quail or shrink.

"This fellow wishes honorable service, sahib."

The squire spoke as if he were calling his master's attention to a horse that was for sale.

"I have seen his family; I have inquired about him; and I have explained to him that unless he serves thee faithfully his wife and his man-child will die at my hands in his absence."

"Can he groom a horse?"

"So he says, sahib, and so say others."

"Can he fight?"

"He slew with his bare hands the man who pricked his eye out with a sword."

"Oh. What payment does he ask?"

"He leaves that matter to your honor's pleasure."

"Good. Instruct him, then. Set him to cleaning my horse, and then return here."

The squire was back again within five minutes and stood before Mohammed Gunga in silent expectation.

"I shall miss thee," said Mohammed Gunga, after five minutes' reflection. "It is well that I have other servants in the North."

"In what have I offended, sahib?"

"In nothing. Therefore there is a trust imposed."

The man salaamed. Mohammed Gunga produced his little handful of gold mohurs, and divided it into two equal portions. One he handed to the squire.

"Stay here. Be always either in the caravansary or else at call. Should the old woman who serves Miss Maklin sahib, the padre sahib's daughter, come and ask thy aid, then saddle swiftly the three horses I will leave with thee, and bear Miss Maklin sahib and her father to my cousin Alwa's place. Present two of the gold mohurs to the hag, should that happen."

"But, sahib, two mohurs? I could buy ten such hags outright for the price."

"She has my word in the matter. It is best to have her eager to win great reward. The hag will stay awake, but see to it that thou sleepest not."

"And for how long must I stay here, sahib?"

"One month—six months—a year; who knows? Until the hag summons thee, or I, by writing or by word of mouth, relieve thee of thy trust."

AT SUNSET he sent the squire to Miss McClean for the letters he had promised to deliver; and at one hour after sunset, when the heat of the earth had begun to rise and throw back a hot-blast to the darkened sky and the little eddies of lukewarm surface wind made movement for horse and man less like a fight with scorching death, he rode off with his new servant, on the two horses left to him of the five with which he came.

A six hundred mile ride without spare horses, in the heat of Northern India, was an undertaking to have made any strong man flinch. The stronger the man, and the more soldierly, the better able he would be to realize the effort it would call for. But Mohammed Gunga rode as if he were starting on a visit to a near-by friend; he was not given to crossing bridges before he

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reached them, nor to letting prospects influence his peace of mind. He was a soldier. He took precautions first, when and where they were possible; then rode, and looked Fate in the eye.

He appeared to take no more notice of the glowering looks that followed him from stuffy balconies and dense-packed corners than of the mosquitos and the heat. Without hurry he picked his way through the thronged streets, where already men lay in thousands to escape the breathlessness of walled interiors. The gutters seemed like trenches where the dead of a devastated city had been laid. The murmur was like the voice of storm-winds gathering, and the little lights along the housetops were the vent-holes on the lid of a tormented underworld.

But he rode on at his ease. Ahead of him lay that which he considered duty. He could feel the long-kept peace of India disintegrating all around him, and he knew, he was certain—as sometimes a brave man can see what cleverer men all overlook—that the right touch by the right man at the right moment, when the last taut-held thread should break, would very likely swing the balance in favor of peace again, instead of individual self-seeking anarchy.

He knew what "Cunnigan" Bahadur would have done. He swore by Cunnigan Bahadur. And by the memory of that same dead, desperately honest Cunningham he swore that no personal profit or convenience or safety should be allowed to stand between him and what was honorable and right. Mohammed Gunga had no secrets from himself, nor lack of imagination. He knew that he was riding, not to preserve the peace of India, for that was as good as gone, but to make possible the winning of it back. And he rode with a smile on his thin lips, as the crusaders once rode on a less self-advertising errand.

CHAPTER IV

"You have failed!" whispered Fate, and a weary civilian
Threw up his task as a matter of course.
"Failed?" said the soldier man. He knew a million
Chances untackled yet. "Get me a horse!"

T. M.

THAT was a strange ride of Mohammed Gunga's, and a fateful one—more full of portent for the British *raj* in India than he, or the British, or the men amid whose homes he rode could ever have anticipated. He averaged a little less than twenty miles a day. Through an Indian hot weather, and with no spare horse, none but a born horseman—a man of light weight and absolute control of temper—could have accomplished that for thirty days on end.

Wherever he rode there was the same unrest. Here and there were new complaints he had not yet heard of—imaginary some of them, and some only too well founded. Wherever there were Rajputs—and that race of fighting men is scattered all about the North—there was ill suppressed impatience for the bursting of the wrath to come. Many of them bore no grudge against the British, but they did bear more than grudge against the money lenders and the fat, litigious traders who had fattened under British rule. At least at the beginning, it was evident that all the interest of all the Rajputs lay in letting the British get the worst of it. Even should the British suddenly wake up and look about them and take steps, or should the British hold their own with native aid, and so save India from anarchy, and afterward reward the men who helped, the Rajputs would stand to gain less individually, or even collectively, than if they let their present master be driven to the sea, and then reverted to the age-old state of feudal lawlessness that once had made them rich.

Many of the Hindu element among them were almost openly disloyal. The *ryots*—the little one- and two-acre farmers—were the least unsettled. They, when he asked them—and he asked often—disclaimed the least desire to change a rule that gave them safe holdings and but one tax collection a year. They were frankly for their individual selves, not even for one another, or for the *ryots* as a class.

Nobody seemed to be for India except Mohammed Gunga, and he said little, but asked ever repeated questions as he rode. There were men who would like to weld Rajputana into one again, and override the rest of India, and there were other men who planned to do the same for the Punjab. There were plots within plots, not many of which he learned in anything like detail, but none of which were more than skin deep below the surface.

All men looked to the sudden, swift, easy whelming of the British *raj*, and then to the plundering of India. Each man

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expected to be rich when the whelming came, and each man waited with ill controlled impatience for the priests' word that would let loose the hundred-million flood of anarchy.

"And one man, one real man whom they trusted, one leader, one man who had one thousand at his back, could change the whole face of things!" he muttered to himself. "Would God there were a Cunnigan! But there is no Cunnigan. And who would follow me? They would pull my beard, and tell me I was scheming for my own ends—I, who was taught by Cunnigan, and would serve only India!"

He would ride before dawn, and when the evening breeze had come to cool the hot earth a little. Through the blazing afternoons, he would lie in the place of honor by some open window, where he could watch a hireling flick the flies off his lean, road-hardened horse and listen to the plotting and the carried tales of plots, pretending always to be sympathetic or else open to conviction.

"A soldier? Hah! A soldier fights for the side that can best reward him," he would grin. "And, when there is no side, perhaps he makes one. I am a soldier."

If they pressed him, he would point to his medal-ribbons, which he always wore.

"The British gave me those for fighting against the Northern tribes beyond the Himalayas," he would tell them. "The Southern tribes—Bengalis of the South and East—would give better picking than mere medal-ribbons."

They were not all sure of him. They were not all satisfied why he should ride on to Peshawur, and decline to stay with them and talk good sedition.

"I would see how weak the British are," he told them.

And he told the truth. But they were not quite satisfied. He would have made a splendid leader to keep among them, until he, too, became too powerful and would have to be deposed in turn.

HIS own holding was a long way from Peshawur, and he was no rich man who could afford at a mere whim to ride two long days' march beyond his goal. Nor was he, as he had explained to Miss McClean, a letter carrier; he would get no more than the merest thanks for delivering her letters to where they could be included in the Government mail bag. Yet he left the road that would have led him homeward to his left and carried on, quickening his pace as he neared the frontier garrison town, and wasting, then, no time at all on seeking information. Nobody supposed that the Pathans and the other frontier tribes were anything but openly rebellious, and he would have been an idiot to ask questions about their loyalty.

Because of their disloyalty, and the ever present danger that they were, one of the biggest British garrisons in India had to be kept cooped up in Peshawur, to rot with fever and ague and the other ninety Indian plagues.

He wanted to see that garrison again, and estimate it, and make up his mind exactly, or probably, what the garrison would do in the event of the rebellion blazing out. And he wanted to try once more to warn some one in authority, and make that some one see the smoldering fire beneath the outer covering of sullen silence.

He received thanks for the letters. He received an invitation to take tea on the veranda of an officer so high in the British service that many a Staff Major would have given a month's pay for a like opportunity. But he was laughed at for the advice he had to give.

"Mohammed Gunga, you're like me; you're getting old!" said the high official.

"Not so very old, sahib. I was a young man when Cunnigan Bahadur raised a regiment and licked the half of Rajputana into shape with it. Not too old, sahib, to wish there were another Cunnigan to ride with!"

"Well, Mohammed Gunga, you're closer to your wish than you suppose. Young Cunningham's gazetted, and probably just about starting on his way out here *via* the Cape of Good Hope. He should be here in three or four months at the outside."

"You mean that, sahib?"

"Wish I didn't! The puppy will arrive here with altogether swollen notions of his own importance and what is due his father's son. He's been Captain of his college at home, and that won't lessen his sense of self-esteem either. I can foresee trouble with that boy."

"Sahib, there is a service I could render."

The Rajput spoke with a strangely constrained voice all of a sudden, but the Commissioner did not notice it; he was too busy

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pulling on a wool-lined jacket to ward off the evening chill.

"Well, Rissaldar sahib, what then?"

"I think that I could teach the son of Cunnigan Bahadur to be worth his salt."

"If you'll teach him to be properly respectful to his betters, I'll be grateful to you, Mohammed Gunga."

"Then, sahib, I will have certain license allowed me in the matter?"

"Do anything you like, in reason, Rissaldar. Only, keep the pup from cutting his eye-teeth on his seniors' convenience, that's all."

Mohammed Gunga wasted no time after that on talking, nor did he wait to specify the nature of the latitude he would expect to be allowed him; he knew better. And he knew now that the one chance which he sought had been given him.

Like all observant natives, he was perfectly aware that the British weakness mostly lay in the age of the senior officers, and the slowness of promotion. There were Majors of over fifty years of age, and if a man were a General at seventy, he was considered fortunate and young. The jealousy with which younger men were regarded would have been humorous, had it not come already so near to plunging India into anarchy.

He did not even trouble to look over the garrison. He took his leave, and rode away the long two-day ride to his own place, where a sadly attenuated rent-roll and a very sadly thinned-down company of servants waited his coming. There, through fourteen hurried, excited days, he made certain arrangements about the disposition of his affairs during an even longer absence; he made certain sales and purchases, pledged the rent of fifty acres for ten years in return for an advance, and on the fifteenth day rode southward, at the head of a five-man escort which, for quality, was worthy of a prince.

A little less than two months later he arrived at Bombay, and by dint of much hard bargaining and economy fitted out himself and his escort so that each man looked as if he were the owner of an escort of his own.

Then, fretful at every added day that strained his fast diminishing resources, he settled down to wait until the ship should come that brought young Cunningham.

CHAPTER V

Lies home beneath a sickly sun,
Where humbleness was taught me?
Or here, where spurs my father won
On bended knee are brought me?

T. M.

HE LANDED, together with about a dozen other newly gazetted subalterns and civil officers, cramped, storm-tossed, snubbed, and was then disgorged from a sailing ship into a port that made no secret of its absolute contempt for new arrivals.

There were liners on the Red Sea route by that time and the only seniors who chose the long passage round the Cape were men returning after sick leave—none too sweet-tempered individuals, and none too prone to give the young idea a good conceit of itself. He and the other youngsters landed with a crushed-in notion that India would treat them very cavalierly before she took them to herself. And all, save Cunningham, were right.

The other men, all homesick and lonely and bewildered, were met by bankers' agents, or in cases only by a hotel servant armed with a letter of instructions. Here and there a bored, tired-eyed European had found time, for somebody or other's sake, to pounce on a new arrival and bear him away to breakfast and a tawdry imitation of the real hospitality of Northern India; but for the most part the beardless boys lounged in the red-hot customs shed (where they were to be mulcted for the privilege of serving their country) and envied young Cunningham.

He, as pale as they, as unexpectant as they were of anything approaching welcome, was in turn first amazed, then suspicious, then pleased, then proud. The different emotions followed one another across his clean-lined face as plainly as a dawn-vista changes; then, as the dawn leaves a landscape finally, true and what it is for all to see, true dignity was left, and the look of a man who stands in armor.

"His father's son!" growled Mohammed Gunga; and the big, black-bearded warriors who stood behind him echoed, "Aye!"

But for four or five inches of straight stature, and a foot, perhaps, of chest girth, he was a second edition of the Cunnigan Bahadur who had raised and led a regiment and licked peace into a warring countryside; and though he was that much bigger

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than his father had been, they dubbed him "*Chota* Cunnigan" on the instant. That means "Little Cunningham."

He had yet to learn that a Rajput, be he poorest of the poor, admits no superior on earth. He did not know yet that these men had come, at one man's private cost, all down the length of India to meet him.

Nobody had told him that the feudal spirit dies harder in Northern Hindustan than it ever did in England, or that the Rajput clans cohere more tightly than the Scots. The Rajput belief, that honest service, unselfishly given, is the greatest gift that any man may bring; that one who has received what he considers favors will serve the giver's son, was an unknown creed to him as yet.

But he stood and looked those six men in the eye, and liked them. And they, before they had as much as heard him speak, knew him for a soldier and loved him as he stood.

They hung sickly scented garlands round his neck, and kissed his hand in turn, and spoke to him thereafter as man to man. They had found their goal worth while, and they bore him off to his hotel in clattering glee, riding before him as men who have no doubt of the honor which they pay themselves. No other of the homesick subalterns drove away with a six-man escort to clear the way and scatter sparks!

They careered round through the narrow gate of the hotel courtyard as if a Viceroy at least were in the trap behind them; and Mohammed Gunga—six medaled strapping feet of him—dismounted, and held out an arm for him to take when he alighted. The hotel people understood at once that Somebody from Somewhere had arrived.

Young Cunningham had never yet been somebody. The men who give their lives for India are nothing much at Home, and their sons are even less. Scarcely even at school, when they had made him Captain of the team, had he felt the feel of homage and the subtle flattery that undermines a bad man's character; at schools in England they confer honors, but take simultaneous precautions. He was green to the dangerous influence of feudal loyalty, but he quitted himself well, with reserve and dignity.

"HE IS good! He will do!" swore Mohammed Gunga—fiercely, for the other emotions are meant for women.

"He is better than the best!"

"We will make a man of this one—a man!"

"Did you mark how he handed me his purse, to defray expenses?" asked a black-bearded soldier of the five.

"He is a man who knows by instinct!" said Mohammed Gunga. "See to it that thy accounting is correct, and overpay no man!"

Deep-throated as a bull, erect as a lance and pleased as a little child, Mohammed Gunga came to him alone that evening, to talk, and to hear him talk, and to tell him of the plans which had been made.

"Thy father gave me this," Mohammed told *Chota* Cunningham, producing a gold watch and chain of the hundred-guinea kind that nowadays are found only among the heirlooms. Young Cunningham looked at it and recognized the heavy old-gold case that he had been allowed to "blow open" when a little boy. On the outside, deep chiseled in the gold, was his father's crest, and on the inside a portrait of his mother.

"Thy father died in these two arms, Bahadur! Thy father said, 'Look after him, Mohammed Gunga, when the time is ripe for him to be a soldier.' And I said, '*Ha, Huzoor!*' So, then! Here is India!"

He waved one hand grandiloquently, as if he were presenting the throne of India to his protégé.

"Here, sahib, is a servant—blood of my own blood."

He clapped his hands, and a man who looked like the big black-ended spirit of Aladdin's lamp stood silent, instant, in the doorway.

"He speaks no English, but he may help to teach thee the Rajput tongue, and he will serve thee well—on *my* honor. His throat shall answer for it! Feed him and clothe him, sahib, but pay him very little. To serve well is sufficient recompense."

Young Cunningham gave his keys at once to the silent servant, as a tacit sign that from that moment he was trusted utterly; and Mohammed Gunga nodded grim approval.

"Thy father saw fit to bequeath me much in the hour when death came on him, sahib. I am no boaster, as he knew. Remember, then, to tell me if I fail at any time in what is due. I am at thy service!"

Tact was inborn in Cunningham, as it had been in his father. He realized that he ought at once to show his appreciation of the high plane of the service offered.

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"There is one way in which you could help me almost at once, Mohammed Gunga," he answered.

"Command me, sahib."

"I need your advice, the advice of a man who really knows. I need horses; and, at first at least, I would rather trust your judgment than my own. Will you help me buy them?"

The Rajput's eyes blazed pleasure. War, and wine, and women, and a horse are the four points on which to ask a man's advice and win his approval by the asking.

"Nay, sahib; why buy horses here? These Bombay traders have only crows' meat, to sell to the ill advised. I have horses, and spare horses for the journey; and in Rajputana I have horses waiting for thee, seven all told—sufficient for a young officer. Six of them are country-bred and weaned—a little wild, perhaps, but strong, and up to thy weight. The seventh is a mare, got by thy father's stallion Aga Khan, him that made more than a hundred miles within a day under a fifteen-stone burden, with neither food nor water, and survived! A good mare, sahib, indeed a mare of mares—fit for thy father's son. That mare I give thee. It is little, sahib, but my best; I am a poor man. The other six I bought. There is the account. I bought them cheaply, paying less than half the price demanded in each case; but I had to borrow and must pay back."

Young Cunningham was hard put to it to keep his voice steady as he answered. This man was a stranger to him. He had a hazy recollection of a dozen or more bearded giants who formed a moving background to his dreams of infancy, and he had expected some sort of welcome from one or two, perhaps, of his father's men when he reached the North. But to have men borrow money that they might serve him, and have horses ready for him, and to be met like this at the gate of India, was a little more than his self-control had been trained as yet to stand.

"I won't waste words, Mohammed Gunga," he said, half choking. "I'll—er—I'll try to prove how I feel about it."

"Ha! How said I? Thy father's son, I said! He, too, was no believer in much promising! I was his servant, and will serve him still by serving thee. The honor is mine, sahib, and the advantage shall be where thy father wished it."

"My father would never have had me——"

"Sahib, forgive the interruption, but a mistake is better checked. Thy father would have flung thee, ungrudged, into a hell of bayonets, me too, and would have followed after, if by so doing he could have served the cause he held in trust. He bred thee, fed thee, and sent thee oversea to grow, that in the end India might gain! Thou and I are but servants of the peace, as he was.

"If I serve thee, and thou the *raj*, though the two of us were weaned on the milk of war, and get our bread by war, we will none the less serve peace! *Aiel* For what is honor, if a soldier lets it rust? Of what use is service, mouthed and ready, but ungiven? It is good, *Chota* Cunnigan Bahadur, that thou art come at last!"

HE SALUTED, and backed out through the swinging door. He had come in his uniform of Rissaldar of the elder Cunningham's now disbanded regiment, so he had not removed his boots as another native, and he himself if in mufti, would have done. Young Cunningham heard him go swaggering, and clanking, and spur-jingling down the corridor as if he had half a troop of horse behind him and wanted Asia to know it!

It was something of a brave beginning, that, for a twenty-one-year-old! Something likely, and expressly calculated by Mohammed Gunga to bring the real man to the surface. He had been no Cunningham unless his sense of duty had been very near the surface; no Englishman, had he not been proud that men of a foreign, conquered race should think him worthy of all that honor; and no man at all if his eye had been quite dry when the veteran light-horseman swaggered out at last and left him to his own reflections.

He had not been human if he had not felt a little homesick still, although home to him had been a place where a man stayed with distant relatives between the intervals of school. He felt lonely, in spite of his reception—a little like a baby on the edge of all things new and wonderful. He would have been no European, if he had not felt the heat; the hotel was like a vapor bath.

But the leaping red blood of youth ran strong in him. He had imagination. He could dream. The good things he was

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tasting were a presage only of the better things to come, and that is a wholesome point of view. He was proud—as who would not be?—to step straight into the tracks of such a father; and with that thought came another, just as good for him, and for India, that made him feel as if he were a robber yet—a thief in another's cornfield, gathering what he did not sow. It came over him in a flood that he must pay the price of all this homage.

Some men pay in advance, some at the time, and some pay afterward. All men, he knew, must pay. It would be his task soon to satisfy these gentlemen who took him at his face value by proving to them that they had made no very great mistake. The thought thrilled him, instead of frightening, brought out every generous instinct that he had, and made him thank the God of All Good Soldiers that at least he would have a chance to die in the attempt. There was nothing much the matter with young Cunningham.

CHAPTER VI

I take no man at rumor's worth,
Nor as the gossips cry him.
A son may ride, and stride, and stand;
His father's eye—his father's hand—
His father's voice may give command;
But ere I trust, I'll try him.

T. M.

BEFORE young Cunningham was called upon to pay even a portion of the price of fealty, there was more of the receiving of it still in store for him, and he found himself very hard put to it indeed to keep overboiling spirits from becoming exultation of the type that nauseates.

None of the other subalterns had influence, nor had they hereditary anchors in the far Northwest that would be likely to draw them on to active service early in their career. They had already been made to surrender their boyhood dreams of quick promotion; now, standing in little groups and asking hesitating questions, they discovered that their destination, Fort William, was about the least desirable of all the awful holes in India.

They were told that a subaltern was lucky who could mount one step of the promotion ladder in his first ten years; that a Major at fifty, a Colonel at sixty, and a General at seventy, were quite the usual thing. And they realized that the pay they would receive would be a mere beggar's pittance in a neighborhood so expensive as Calcutta, and that their little private means would be eaten up by the mere necessities of life. They showed their chagrin, and it was not very easy for young Cunningham, watching Mohammed Gunga's lordly preparations for the long up-country journey, to strike just the right attitude of pleasure at the prospect without seeming to flaunt his better fortune.

Mohammed Gunga interlarded his hoarse orders to the mule drivers with descriptions in stateliest English, thrown out at random to the world at large, of the glories of the manlier North—of the plains, where a man might gallop while a horse could last, and of the mountains up beyond the plains. He sniffed at the fetid Bombay reek, and spoke of the clean air sweeping from the snow-topped Himalayas, that put life and courage into the lungs of men who rode like centaurs! And the other subalterns looked wistful, eying the bullock carts that would take their baggage by another route.

Fully the half of what Mohammed Gunga said was due to pride of race and country. But the rest was all deliberately calculated to rouse the wicked envy of those who listened. He meant to make this son of *Pukka* Cunnigan feel before he reached his heritage that he was going up to something worth his while. To quote his own North Country metaphor, he meant to "make the colt come up to the bit." He meant that *Chota* Cunnigan should have a proper sense of his own importance, and should chafe at restraint, to the end that when his chance did come to prove himself, he would jump at it. Envy, he calculated, the unrighteous envy of men less fortunately placed, would make a good beginning. And it did, though hardly in the way he calculated.

Young Cunningham, tight-lipped to keep himself from grinning like a child, determined to prove himself worthy of the better fortune; and Mohammed Gunga would have cursed into his black beard in disgust, had he known of the private resolutions being formed to obey orders to the letter, and obtain the good will of his seniors. The one thing that the grim old Rajput wished for his protégé was jealousy! He wanted him so well hated by the nabobs who had grown crusty and incompetent in high command, that life for him in any Northern garrison would be impossible.

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THROUGHOUT the two-month journey to the North, Mohammed Gunga never left a stone unturned to make Cunningham believe himself much more than ordinary clay. All along the trunk road, that trails by many thousand towns and listens to a hundred languages, whatever good there was was Cunningham's. Whichever room was best in each *dak* bungalow, whichever chicken the *consumah* least desired to kill, whoever were the stoutest *dhoolie* bearers in the village, whichever horse had the easiest paces—all were Cunningham's. Respect were his, and homage, and obeisance, for the Rajput saw to it.

Of evenings, while they rested, but before the sun went down, the old Rissaldar would come with his naked saber and defy *Chota* "Cunnigan" to try to touch him. For five long weeks he tried each evening, the Rajput never doing anything but parry—changing his saber often to the other hand, and grinning at the schoolboy swordsmanship—until one evening, at the end of a more than usually hard-fought bout, the youngster pricked him, lunged, and missed slitting his jugular by the merest fraction of an inch.

"Ho!" laughed Mohammed Gunga later, as he sluiced out the cut while his own adherents stood near-by and chaffed him. "The cub cuts his teeth, then! Soon it will be time to try his pluck."

"Be gentle with him, Rissaldar sahib; a good cub dies as easily as a poor one, until he knows the way."

"Leave him to me! I will show him the way, and we will see what we will see. If he is to disgrace his father's memory and us, he shall do it where there are few to see and none to talk of it. When Alwa and the others ask me, as they will ask, 'Is he a man?' I will give them a true answer! I think he is a man, but I need to test him in all ways possible before I pledge my word on it."

But after that little accident the old Rissaldar had sword-sticks fashioned at a village near the road, and ran no more risks of being killed by the stripling he would teach; and before many more days of the road had ribboned out young Cunningham, bareback, or from the saddle, could beat the other to the ground, and could hold his own on foot afterward, with either hand.

"The hand and eye are good!" said Mohammed Gunga. "It is time, now, for another test."

So he made a plausible excuse about the horses, and they halted for four days at a roadside *dak* bungalow, near where a foul-mouthed fakir sat and took tribute at a crossroads. It was a strangely chosen place to rest at.

Deep down in a hollow, where the trunk road took advantage of a winding gorge between the hills, screened on nearly all sides by green jungle, whose brown edges wilted in the heat which the inner steam defied; stuffy, smelly, comfortless, it stood like a last-left rearguard of a white man's city, swamped by the deathless, ceaselessly advancing tide of green. It was tucked between mammoth trees that had been left there when the space for it was cleared a hundred years before, and that now stood like grim giant guardians, with arms outstretched to hold the verdure back.

The little tribe of camp followers chased at least a dozen snakes out of corners and slew them in the open, as a preliminary to further investigation. There were *kas-kas* mats on the four-square floors, and each of these, when lifted, disclosed a swarm of scorpions, that had to be exterminated before a man dared move his possessions in. The once-white calico ceilings moved suggestively where rats and snakes chased one another, or else hunted some third species of vermin; and there was a smell, and a many-voiced weird whispering, that hinted at corruption and war to the death behind skirting boards and underneath the floor.

It had evidently not been occupied for many years. The *consumah* looked like a gray-bearded skeleton, compressed within a tightened shroud of parchment skin, that shone where a coffin, or a tomb, had touched it. He seemed to have forgotten what the bungalow was for, or that a sahib needed things to eat, until the ex-Rissaldar enlightened him, and then he complained weezily.

The stables, or, rather, the patch-and-hole-covered desolation that once had been stables, was altogether too snake-defiled and smelly to be worth repairing. The string of horses was quartered cleanly and snugly under tents, and Mohammed Gunga went to enormous trouble in arranging a ring of watch-fires at even distances.

"Are there thieves here, then?" asked Cunningham, and the Rajput nodded, but said nothing. He seemed satisfied, though,

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that the man he had brought safely thus far at so much trouble would be well enough housed in the creaky wreck of the bungalow, and he took no precautions of any kind as to guarding its approaches.

Cunningham watched the preparations for his supper with ill concealed disgust, saw the customary chase of a rubber-muscled chicken, heard its death gurgles, saw the guts removed, to make sure that the *consumah* did not cook it with that part of its anatomy intact, as he surely would do unless watched, and then strolled ahead a little way along the road.

THE fakir was squatting in the distance, on a big white stone. In the quiet of the gloaming Cunningham could hear his coarse, lewd voice tossing crumbs of abuse and mockery to the seven or eight villagers who squatted near him, half amused, half frightened, and altogether credulous.

Even as he drew nearer Cunningham could not understand a word of what the fakir said; but the pantomime was obvious. His were the voice and the manner of the professional beggar, who has no more need to whine, but still would ingratiate. It was the bullying, brazen swagger, and the voice that trafficks in filth and impudence instead of wit; and, in payment for his evening bellyful, he was pouring out abuse of Cunningham that grew viler and yet viler as Cunningham came nearer and the fakir realized that his subject could not understand a word of it.

The villagers looked leery, and eyed Cunningham sidewise at each fresh sally. The fakir grew bolder, until one of his listeners smothered an open laugh in both hands, and rolled over sidewise. Cunningham came closer yet, half enamored of the weird scene, half curious to discover what the stone could be on which the fakir sat.

The fakir grew nervous. Perhaps, after all, this was one of those hatefully clever sahibs who know enough to pretend they do not know! The abuse and vile innuendo changed to more obsequious, less obviously filthy references to other things than Cunningham's religion, likes, and pedigree, and the little crowd of men who had tacitly encouraged him before got ready now to stand at a distance and take sides against him, should the white man turn out to have understood.

But Cunningham happened to catch sight of a cloud of parrakeets, that swept in a screaming ellipse for a better branch to nest in, and added the one touch of gorgeous color needed to make the whole scene utterly unearthly and unlike anything he had ever dreamed of, or had seen in pictures, or had had described to him. He stood at gaze, forgetful of the stone that had attracted him, and of the fakir, spellbound by the wonder-blend of hues branch-backed and framed in gloom as the birds' scream was framed in silence.

And, seeing him at gaze, the fakir recovered confidence and jeered new ribaldry. A huge black-booted form licked out from behind Cunningham, and before he had recovered from surprise he saw the fakir sprawling on his back, howling for mercy, while Mohammed Gunga beat the blood out of him with a whalebone riding-whip.

The sun went down with Indian suddenness, and shut off the scene of upraised lash and squirming, naked, ash-smeared devil, as a magic-lantern picture disappears. Only the creature's screams reverberated through the jungle, like a belated echo to the restless parrakeets.

"He will sleep less easily for a week or two!" hazarded Mohammed Gunga, stepping back toward Cunningham. In the sudden darkness, the white breeches showed, and the whites of his eyes, but little else; his voice growled like a rumble from the underworld.

"Why did you do it, Rissaldar? What did he say?"

"It was enough, Bahadur, that he sat on that stone; for that alone he should have been beaten! What he said was but the babbling of priests. All priests are alike. They have a common jargon, a common disrespect for what they dare not openly defy; these temple rats of fakirs mimic them. That is all, sahib. A whipping meets the case."

"But the stone? Why shouldn't he sit on it?"

"Wait one minute, sahib, and then see."

He formed his hands into a trumpet, and bellowed through them in a high-pitched, nasal, ululating order to somebody behind:

"Oh-h-h—*battee—laol*"

The black-dark roadside echoed it, and a dot of light leaped up, and a man came running with what gradually grew into a lamp.

Mohammed Gunga seized the lamp, bent for a few seconds over the still sprawling

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fakir, whipped him again twice, cursed him, and kicked him, until he got up and ran like a specter for the gloom beyond the trees. Then, with a rather stately sweep of the lamp, and a tremble in his voice that was probably intentional, designed to make Cunningham at least aware of the existence of emotion before he looked, he let the light fall on the slab on which the fakir had been squatting.

"Look, Cunnigan sahib!"

THE youngster bent down above the slab, and tried in the fitful light to make out what the markings were that ran almost from side to side, in curves, across the stone. But it was too dark; the light was too fitful; the marks themselves were too faint from the constant squatting of roadside wanderers.

Mohammed Gunga set the lamp down on the stone, and he and the attendant took little sticks, sharp-pointed, with which they began to dig hurriedly, scratching and scraping at what presently showed, even in that rising and falling light, as Roman lettering. Soon Cunningham himself began to lend a hand. He made out a date first, and he could feel it with his fingers before his eyes deciphered it. Gradually, letter by letter, word by word, he read it off, feeling a strange new thrill run through him as each line followed, like a voice from the haunted past.

A. D. 1823. A. D.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

GENERAL ROBERT FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM

WHO DIED ON THIS SPOT

ÆTAT: 81

FROM WOUNDS INFLICTED BY A TIGER.

There was no sound audible except the purring of the lamp flame and the heavy breathing of the three, as Cunningham gazed down at the very crudely carved, stained, often desecrated slab, below which lay the first of the Anglo-Indian Cunninghams.

This man, these crumbled bones, that lay under a forgotten piece of rock, had made all of their share of history. They had begotten *Pukka* Cunningham, who had hacked the name deeper yet in the crisscrossed annals of a land of war. It was strange, it was queer, uncanny, for the third of the Cunninghams to be sitting on the stone. It was unexpected. Yet it seemed to have a place in the scheme of things, for he caught himself searching backward in his memory.

He received an impression that something was expected of him. He knew, by instinct and reasoning he could not have explained, that neither Mohammed Gunga nor the other man would say a word until he spoke. They were waiting—he knew they were—for a word, or a sign, or an order (he did not know which) on which would hang the future of all three of them.

Yet, there was no hurry, no earthly hurry. He felt sure of it. In the silence and the blackness, in the tense, steamy atmosphere of expectance, he felt perfectly at ease, although he knew, too, that there was superstition to be reckoned with; and that is something which a white man finds it hard to weigh and cope with as a rule.

The sweat ran down his face in little streams, and the prickly heat began to move across his skin, like a fiery-footed centipede, beneath his undershirt, but he noticed neither. He began to be unconscious of anything except the knowledge that the bones of his grandsire lay underneath him, and that Mohammed Gunga waited for the word that would fit into the scheme and solve a problem.

"Are there any tigers here now?" he asked presently, in a perfectly normal voice. He spoke as he had done when his servant asked him which suit he would wear.

"*Ha, sahib!* Many."

"Man-eaters, by any chance?"

Mohammed Gunga and the other man exchanged quick glances, but Cunningham did not look up. He did not see the quick-flashed whites, as their eyes met and looked down again.

"There is one, sahib, so say the *consumah* and the head man—a full-grown tiger, in his prime."

"I will shoot him."

Four words, said quietly. Not, "Do you think," or, "I would like to," or, "Perhaps." They were perfectly definite, and spoken without a trace of excitement; yet this man had never yet seen a tiger.

"Very good, sahib."

That, too, was spoken in a level voice, but Mohammed Gunga's eyes and the other

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man's met once again above his head. "We will stay here four days; by the third day there will be time enough to have brought an elephant and——"

"I will go on foot," said Cunningham, quite quietly. "To-morrow, at dawn, Rissaldar sahib. Will you be good enough to make arrangements? All we need to know is where he is and how to get there; will you attend to that?"

"*Ha, sahib!*"

"Thanks. I wonder if my supper's ready."

He turned and walked away with a little salute-like movement of his hand that was reminiscent of his father. The two Rajputs watched him in heavy-breathing silence until the small group of lights, where the horse tents faced the old *dak* bungalow, swallowed him. Then:

"He is good. He will do!" said the blackbeard who had brought the lamp.

"He is good. But many sahibs would have acted coolly, thus. There must be a greater test. There must be no doubt—no littlest doubt. Alwa and the others will ask me on my honor and I will answer on my honor, yes or no."

It was an hour before the two of them returned, and looked the horses over, and strolled up to bid Cunningham good-night; and in the meanwhile they had seen about the morrow's tiger, and another matter.

CHAPTER VII

What found ye then? Why heated ye the pot?
What useful metal down the channels ran?
Gold? Steel to forge your weapons? Iron? What?
Nay. Out of the fire we kindled stepped a man!
T. M.

THEY set the legs of Cunningham's string-woven bed into pans of water, to keep the scorpions and ants and snakes at bay, and then left him in pitch darkness to his own devices, with a parting admonition to keep his slippers on; for the floor, in the dark, would be the prowling-place of venomed death.

It was he who set the lamp on the little table by his bedside, for his servant, for the first time on that journey, was not at hand to execute his thoughts almost before he had spoken them. Mohammed Gunga had explained that the man was sick; and that seemed strange, for he had been well enough and more than usually efficient but an hour before.

But there were stranger things, and far more irritating ones to interfere with the peaceful passage of the night. There were sounds that were unaccountable; there was the memory of the wayside tombstone, and the train of thought that it engendered. Added to the hot, baking stuffiness that radiated from the walls, there came the squeaking of a punkah rope pulled out of time. The piece of piping in the mud brick wall through which the rope passed had become clogged and rusted, and the villager pressed into service had forgotten how to pull. He jerked at the cord between nods, as the heat of the veranda and the unaccustomed night duty combined to make him sleepy.

Soon the squeaking became intolerable, and Cunningham swore at him—in English, because he spoke little of any native language yet, and had not the least idea in any case what the *punkah wallah's* tongue might be. For a while after that the pulling was more even. He lay on one elbow, letting the swinging mat-fan just miss his ear and examining his rifle and pistols for lack of anything better to keep him from going mad. Then, suddenly, the pulling ceased altogether. Silence and heat shut down on him like a coffin lid. Even the lamp flame close beside him seemed to grow dim; the weight of black night that was suffocating him seemed to crush light out of the flame as well.

No living mortal could endure that, he imagined. He swore aloud, but there was no answer, so he got up, after crashing his rifle butt down on the floor to scare away anything that crawled. For a moment he stood, undecided whether to take the lamp or rifle with him; then decided on the rifle, for the lamp might blow out in some unexpected night gust, whereas if he left it burning where it was it would go on burning and show him the way back to bed again. Besides, he was too new to the joy of owning the last new thing in sporting rifles to hesitate for long about what to keep within his grasp.

Through the open door he could see nothing but pitch blackness, unpunctuated by even a single star. There were no lights where the tents stood, so he judged that even the accustomed natives had found the added heat of Mohammed Gunga's watch-fires intolerable and had raked them out. But from where he imagined that the

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village must be came the *dum-tu-dum-tu-dum* of tomtoms, like fever blood pulsating in the veins of devils of the night.

The *punkah wallah* slept. He could just make out the man's blurred shape, a shadow in the shadows, dog-curled, with the punkah rope looped round his foot. Cunningham kicked him gently and the man stirred, but fell asleep again. He kicked him harder. The man sat up and stared, terrified; the whites of his eyes were distinctly visible. He seemed to have forgotten why he was there, and to imagine that he saw a ghost.

Cunningham spoke to him—the first words that came into his head.

"Go on pulling," he said in English, quite kindly.

But if he had loosed his rifle off, the effect could not have been more instantaneous. The man clutched his twisted rag of a turban in one hand, kicked his leg free, and ran for it; leaped the veranda rail, and vanished—a night shadow, swallowed by its mother night.

"Come back!" called Cunningham. "*Ideraol* I won't hurt you!"

But there was no answer, save the tomtoms' thunder, swelling now into a devils' chorus—coming nearer. It seemed to be coming from the forest, but he reasoned that it could not be; it must be some village marriage feast, or perhaps an orgy; he had paid out what would seem to the villagers a lot of money, and it might be that they were celebrating the occasion. It was strange, though, that he could see no lights where the village ought to be.

For a moment he had a half formed intention to shout for Mohammed Gunga; but he checked that, reasoning that the Rajput might think he was afraid. Then his eye caught sight of something blacker than the shadows—something long and thin and creepy, that moved; and he remembered that bed, where the pans of water would protect him, was the only safe place.

SO HE returned into the hot, black silence where the tiny lamp flame guttered and threw shadows. He wondered why it guttered. It seemed to be actually short of air. There were four rooms, he remembered, to the bungalow, all connected and each opening outward by a door that faced one of the four sides; he wondered whether the outer doors were opened to admit a draft, and started to investigate.

Two of them were shut tight, and he could not kick them open; the dried-out teak and the heavy iron bolts held as if they had been built to resist a siege. The noise that he made as he rattled at them frightened a swarm of unseen *things*, unguessed-at shapes, that scurried away. He thought he could see beady little eyes that looked and disappeared, and circled round, and stopped to look again. He could hear creepy movements in the stillness. It seemed better to leave those doors alone.

One other door, which faced that of his own room, was open wide, and he could feel the forest through it; there was nothing to be seen, but the stillness moved. The velvet blackness was deeper by a shade, and the heat, uprising to get even with the sky, bore up a stench with it. There was no draft, no movement except upward. Earth was panting—in time, it seemed, to the thunder of the tomtoms.

He went back and lay on the bed again, leaning the rifle against the cot frame, and trying by sheer will power to prevent the blood from bursting his veins. He realized before long that he was parched with thirst, and reached out for the water jar that stood beside the lamp; but as he started to drink he realized that a crawling evil was swimming round and round in rings in the water. In a fit of horror he threw the thing away and smashed it into fragments in a corner. He saw a dozen rats, at least, scamper to drink before the water could evaporate or filter through the floor. When they were gone there was no half drowned crawling thing either. They had eaten it.

He clutched his rifle to him. The barrel was hot, but the feel of it gave him a sense of companionship. And then, as he lay back on the bed again, the lamp went out. He groped for it and shook it. There was no oil.

Now what had been hot horror turned to fear that passed all understanding, to the hate that does not reason, to the cold sweat breaking on the roasted skin. Where the four walls had been there was blackness of immeasurable space. He could hear the thousand-footed cannibals of night creep nearer, driven in toward him by the dinning of the tomtoms. He felt that his bed was up above a scrambling swarm of black-legged things that fought.

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He had no idea how long he lay stock-still, for fear of calling attention to himself. He hated his servant and Mohammed Gunga, and all India. Once—twice, he thought he heard another sound, almost like the footfall of a man on the veranda near him. Once he thought that a man breathed within ten paces of him, and for a moment there was a distinct sensation of not being alone. He hoped it was true; he could deal with an assassin. That would be something tangible to hate, and hit. Manhood came to his assistance—the spirit of the soldier, that will bow to nothing that has shape; but it died away again as the creeping silence once more shut down on him.

And then the thunder of the tomtoms ceased. Then even the venomed crawlers that he knew were near him faded into nothing that really mattered, compared to the greater, stealthy horror that he *knew* was coming, born of the shuddersome, shut silence that ensued. There was neither air nor view; no sense of time or space; nothing but the coal-black pit of terror yawning, cold sweat in the heat, and a footfall—an undoubted footfall, followed by another one, too heavy for a man's.

Where heavy feet were, there was something tangible. His veins tingled and the cold sweat dried. Excitement began to reawaken all his soldier senses, and the wish to challenge seized him—the soldierly intent to warn the unaware, which is the actual opposite of cowardice.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

He lipped the words, but his dry throat would not voice them. Before he could clear his throat or wet his lips, his eye caught something lighter than the night—two things, ten—twelve paces off; two things that glowed, or sheened, as if there were light inside them—too big and too far apart to be owl's eyes, but singularly like them. They moved a little sidewise and toward him; and again he heard the heavy, stealthy footfall.

They stayed still then for what may have been half a minute, and another sense—smell—warned him, and stirred up the man in him. He had never smelled it in his life; it must have been instinct that assured him of an enemy behind the strange, unpleasant, rather musky reek that filled the room. His right hand brought the rifle to his shoulder without sound, and almost without conscious effort on his part.

HE FORGOT the heat now, and the silence, and the discomfort. He lay still on his side, squinting down the rifle barrel at a spot he judged was midway between a pair of eyes that glowed, and wondering where his foresight might be. It struck him all at once that it was quite impossible to see the foresight—that he must actually touch what he would hit, if he would be at all sure of hitting it.

He remembered, too, in that instant, as a born soldier does remember things, that in the dark an attacking enemy is probably more frightened than his foe. His father had told it him when he was a little lad afraid of bogies; he in turn had told it to the other boys at school, and they had passed it on until in that school it had become rule number one of schoolboy lore—just as rule number two in all schools where the sons of soldiers go is, "Take the fight to him."

He leaped from the bed, with his rifle out in front of him, white-nightshirted and unexpected, sudden enough to scare the wits out of anything that had them. He was met by a snarl. The two eyes narrowed and then blazed. They lowered, as if their owner gathered up his weight to spring. Cunningham fired between them. The flash and the smoke blinded him; the burst of the discharge within four echoing walls deadened his ears, and he was aware of nothing but a voice beside him that said quietly: "Well done, Bahadur! Thou art thy father's son!"

He dropped his rifle butt to the floor, and some one struck a light. Even then it was thirty seconds before his strained eyes grew accustomed to the flare and he could see the tiger at his feet less than a yard away—dead, bleeding, wide-eyed, obviously taken by surprise and shot as he prepared to spring. Beside him, within a yard, Mohammed Gunga stood, with a drawn saber in his right hand and a pistol in his left. There were three other men standing like statues by the walls.

"How long have you been here?" demanded Cunningham.

"A half hour, sahib."

"Why?"

"In case of need, sahib. That tiger killed a woman yesterday at dawn, and was driven off his kill; he was not likely to be an easy mark for an untried hunter."

"Why did you enter without knocking?"

The ex-Rissaldar said nothing.

"I see that you have shoes on."

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"The scorpions, sahib; the scorpions——"

"Would you be pleased, Mohammed Gunga, if I entered your house with my hat on and without knocking or without permission?"

"Sahib, I——"

"Be good enough to have that brute's carcass dragged out and skinned, and—ah—leave me to sleep, will you?"

Mohammed Gunga bowed and growled an order; another man passed the order on, and the tomtom thundering began again as a dozen villagers pattered in to take away the tiger.

"Tell them, please," commanded Cunningham, "that that racket is to cease. I want to sleep."

Again Mohammed Gunga bowed, without a smile or a tremor on his face; again a growled order was echoed and reëchoed through the dark. The drumming stopped.

"Is there oil in the Bahadur's lamp?" asked Mohammed Gunga.

"Probably not," said Cunningham.

"I will command that——"

"You needn't trouble, thank you, Rissaldar sahib. I sleep better in the dark. I'll be glad to see you after breakfast as usual—ah—without your shoes, unless you come in uniform. Good night."

The Rajput signed to the others and withdrew with dignity. Cunningham reloaded his rifle in the dark and lay down. Within five minutes the swinging of the punkah and the squeaking of the rope resumed, but regularly this time; Mohammed Gunga had apparently unearthed a man who understood the business. Reaction, the intermittent coolth, as the mat-fan swung above his face, the steady, evenly timed squeak and movement; not least, the calm of well-asserted dignity, all joined to have one way, and *Chota* Cunnigan Bahadur slept, to dream of fire-eyed tigers dancing on tombstones laid on the roof of hell, and of a grandfather in full General's uniform who said, "Well done, Bahadur!"

BUT outside, by a remade campfire, Mohammed Gunga sat and chuckled to himself, and every now and then grew eloquent to the bearded men who sat beside him.

"*Aiel* Did you hear him reprimand me? By the beard of God's Prophet, that is a man of men! So was his father. Now I will tell Alwa and the others that I bring a man to them. By the teeth of God and my own honor I will swear to it. His first tiger—he had never seen a tiger! In the dark and unexpected—caught by it, to all seeming, like a trapped man in a cage—no lamp—no help at hand, or so *he* thought until it was all over. And he ran *at* the tiger! And then, 'You come with your shoes on, Mohammed Gunga; why, forsooth?' Did you hear him? By the blood of Allah, we have a man to lead us!"

CHAPTER VIII

Now, God give good going to master o' mine;
God speed him, and lead him, and nerve him;
God give him a lead of a length in the line,
And, God let him boast that I serve him!

T. M.

AT HOWRAH, while Mohammed Gunga was employing each chance circumstance to test the pluck and decision and reliability of Cunningham at almost every resting-place along the Grand Trunk Road, the armed squire he had left behind with a little handful of gold mohurs and three horses was finding time heavy on his hands.

Like his master, Ali Partab was a man of action, to whom the purlieus of a caravansary were well enough on rare occasions. He could ruffle it with the best of them; like any of his race he could lounge with dignity, and listen to the tales that hum wherever many horsemen congregate; and he was no mean *raconteur*—he had a tale or two to tell himself, of women and the chase and of the laugh that he, too, had flung in the teeth of fear when opportunity arose.

But each new story of the paid tale tellers, who squat and drone and reach a climax, and then pass the begging-bowl before they finish it, each merrily related jest brought in by members of the constantly arriving trading parties, each neigh of his three chargers—every new phase of the kaleidoscopic life he watched, stirred new ambition in him to be up and away and doing. Many a dozen times he had to remind himself that "there had been a trust imposed."

He exercised the horses daily, riding each in turn until he was as lean and lithe and hard beneath the skin as they were. They were Mohammed Gunga's horses, he Mohammed Gunga's man; therefore, his honor was involved. He reasoned, when he took the trouble to, along the good, clean feudal line that lays down clearly what service is:

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there is no honor, says that argument, in serving any one who is content with half a service, and the honor is the only thing that counts.

As day succeeded ever sultrier, ever longer-drawn-out day, as each night came that saw him peg the horses out wherever what little breezes moved might fan them, as he sat among the courtyard groups and listened in the heavy heat, the fact grew more apparent to him that this trust of his was something after all which a man of worth might shoulder proudly. There was danger in it.

The talk among the traders—darkly hinted, most of it, and couched in metaphor—was all of blood, and what would follow on the letting of it. Now and then a loud-mouthed boaster would throw caution to the winds and speak openly of a grim day coming for the British. He would be checked instantly by wiser men, but not before Ali Partab had heard enough to add to his private store of information.

Priests came from a dozen cities to the eastward, all nominally after pilgrims for the sacred places, but all strangely indifferent to their quest. They preferred, it would seem, to sit in rings with chance-met ruffians, with believers and unbelievers alike, even with men of lower caste than they, and talk of other things than pilgrimages.

"Next year one hundred years ago, the English conquered India. Remember ye the prophecy? One hundred years they had! This, then, is the last year. Whom the gods would whelm they first deprive of reason; mark ye this! The cartridges they serve out to the sepoys now are smeared with the blended fat of cows and pigs. Knowing that we Hindus hold the cow a sacred beast, they do this sacrilege; and why? They would make us bite the cartridges and lose our caste. And why again? Because they would make us Christians! That is the truth! Else why are the Christian missionaries here in Howrah?"

The listeners would nod, while the little red fires glowed and purred above the pipes, and others not included in the circle strained forward through the dark to listen.

"The gods get ready now! Are ye ready?"

Elsewhere a hadji, green-turbaned from the pilgrimage to Mecca, would hold out to a throng of true believers.

"Aye! Pig's fat on the cartridges! The new drill is that the sepoy bites the cartridge first to spill a little powder and make priming. Which true believer wishes to defile himself with pig's fat? Why do they this? Why are the Christian missionaries here? Ask both riddles with one breath, for both two are one!"

"Slay, then!"

"Up, now, and slay!"

THERE would be an instant, eager restlessness, while Ali Partab would glance over to where the horses stood, and would wonder why the word that loosed him was so long in coming. The hadji would calm his listeners, and tell them to get ready, but be still and await the sign.

"There were to be one hundred years, ran the prophecy; but ninety-nine and a portion have yet run. Wait for the hour!"

Then, for perhaps the hundredth time, Ali Partab would pretend that movement alone could save one or other of his horses from heat apoplexy. He would mount and ride at a walking pace through the streets, which seemed like a night view of a stricken battlefield, turn down by the palace wall, and then canter to the schoolhouse, where the hag, wiser than her mistress, would be sleeping in the open.

"Thou! Mother of a murrain! Toothless one! Is there no word yet?"

The hag would leer up through the heavy darkness, make certain that he had no lance with him with which to prod her in the ribs, scratch herself a time or two, like a stray dog half awakened, and then leer knowingly.

"Hast thou the gold mohurs?" she would demand.

"Am I a sieve?"

"Let my old eyes see them, sahib."

He would take out two gold coins and hold them out in such a way that she could look at them without the opportunity to snatch.

"There is no word yet," she would answer, when her eyes had feasted on them as long as his patience would allow.

"Have they no fear, then?"

"None. Only madness!"

"See that they bite thee not! Keep thy wits with thee, and be ready to bring me word in time, else——"

"Patience, sahib! Show me the coins again—one little look—again once!"

But Ali Partab would wheel and ride

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away, leaving her to mumble and gibber in the road, and curl again on to her blanket in the blackest corner by the door.

Once on an expedition of that kind he encountered Duncan McClean himself. The lean, tall Scotsman, gray-headed from the cares he had taken on himself, a little bowed from heat and hopelessness, but showing no least symptom of surrender in the kind, strong lines of a rugged face, stood eyes upward in the moonlight. The moon at least looked cool. It was at the full, like a disk of silver, and he seemed to drink in the beams that bathed him.

"Does he worship it?" wondered Ali Partab, reining from an amble to a walk, and watching half reverently. The followers of Mohammed are mostly superstitious about the moon; the feeling that Ali Partab had for this man of peace who could so gaze up at it was something very much like respect. And, with the twenty-second sense that soldiers have, he knew without a word spoken or a deed seen done, that this would be a wielder of cold steel to be reckoned with, should he ever slough the robes of peace and take it into his silvered head to fight. The Rajput, who respects decision above all other virtues—perhaps because it is the one that he most lacks—could sense firm, unshakable, quick-seized determination on the instant.

Duncan McClean acknowledged the fierce-seeming stare with a salute, and Ali Partab dismounted instantly. He who holds a trust from such as Mohammed Gunga is polite in recognition of the trust. He leaned then against the horse's withers, wondering how far he ought to let politeness go and whether his honor bade him show contempt for the Christian's creed.

"Is there any way, I wonder," asked the Scotsman, the clean-clipped suspicion of Scots dialect betraying itself even through the Hindustani that he used, "of getting letters through to some mail station?"

"I know not," said the Rajput.

"You are a Mohammedan?" The Scotsman peered at him, adjusting his viewpoint to the moon's rays. "I see you are. A Rajput, too, I think?"

"*Ha, sahib.*"

"There was a Rangar here not very long ago." This man evidently knew the proper title to give a true believer of the proudest race there is; Ali Partab's heart began to go out to him! "An officer, I think, once of the Rajput Horse, who very kindly carried letters for me. Perhaps you know of some other gentleman of your race about to travel northward? He could earn at least gratitude."

"So-ho!" thought Ali Partab to himself. "I have known men of his race who would have offered money to be spat on!—Not now, sahib," he answered aloud.

"Mohammed Gunga was the officer's name. Do you know him or know of him by any chance?"

"*Ha, sahib.* I know him well. It is an honor."

The Scotsman smiled. "He must be very far away by this time. How many are there, I wonder, in India who have such things spoken of them when their backs are turned?"

"More than a few, sahib! I would draw steel for the good name of more than a hundred men whom I know, and there be many others!"

"Men of your own race?"

"And yours, sahib."

THERE was no bombast in the man's voice; it was said good-naturedly, as a man might say, "There are some friends to whom I would lend money." No man with any insight could mistake the truth that underlay the boast. The Scotsman bowed.

"I am glad indeed to have met you. Will you sit down a little while?"

"Nay, sahib. The hour is late; I was but keeping the blood moving in this horse of mine."

"Well, tell me, since you won't stay, have you any notion who the man was whom Mohammed Gunga sent to get my letters? My daughter handed them to him one evening late, at this door."

"I am he, sahib."

"Then—I understood—perhaps I was mistaken—I thought it was his man who came?"

"Praised be Allah, I am his man, sahib!"

"Oh. I wonder whether my servants praise God for the privilege!"

McClean made the remark only half aloud and in English. Ali Partab could not have understood the words, but he may have caught their meaning, for he glanced sidewise at the old hag, mumbling in the shadow, and grinned into his beard.

"Are you in communication with him? Could you get a letter to him?"

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"I have no slightest notion where he is, sahib."

"If my letters could once reach him, wherever he might be, I would feel confident of their arriving at their destination."

"I, too, sahib!"

"I sent one letter—to a Government official. It can not have reached him, for there should have been an answer and none has come. It had reference to this terrible suttee business. Suttee is against the law, as well as against all dictates of reason and humanity; yet the Hindus make a constant practise of it here under our very eyes. These native States are under treaty to observe the law. I intend to do all in my power to put a stop to their ghoulish practises, and Maharaja Howrah knows what my intentions are. It must be a Mohammedan, this time, to whom I entrust my correspondence on suttee!"

Now a Rangar is a man whose ancestors were Hindus but who became converts to Islam. Like all proselytes, they adhere more enthusiastically to their religion than do the men whose mother-creed it is; and the fact that the Rangars originally became converts under duress is often thrown in their teeth by the Hindus, who gain nothing in the way of brotherly regard in the process. A Rangar hates a Hindu as enthusiastically as he loves a fight. Ali Partab began to drum his fingers on his teeth, and to exhibit less impatience to be off.

"There is no knowing, sahib; I, too, am no advocate of superstitious practises involving cruelty; I might get a letter through. My commission from the Rissaldar sahib would include all honorable matters not obstructive to the main issue. I have certain funds——"

"I, too, have funds," smiled the missionary.

"I am not allowed, sahib, to involve myself in any brawl until after my business is accomplished. It would be necessary, first, to assure me on that point. My honor is involved in that matter. To whom and of what nature would the letter be?"

"A letter to her Majesty's Commissioner at Abu, reporting to him that Hindu widows are still compelled in this city to burn themselves to death above their husbands' funeral pyres."

The Rajput grinned.

"Does the Camishnah sahib not know it, then?"

"There will be no chance of his not knowing should my report reach him!"

"I will see, sahib, what can be done then in the matter. If I can find a man I will bring him to you."

The missionary thanked him and stood watching as the Rajput rode away. When the horseman's free, lean back had vanished in the inky darkness his eyes wandered over to a point where tongues of flame licked upward, casting a dull, dancing crimson glow on the hot sky. Here and there, silhouetted in the firelight, he could see the pugrees and occasional long poles of men who prodded at the embers. Ululating through the din of tomtoms, he could catch the wails of women. He shuddered, prayed a little, and went in.

THAT day, even the little bazaar fosterlings whom he had begged and coaxed and taught had all deserted to be present at the burning of three widows. Even the lepers in the tiny hospital that he had started had limped out for a distant view. He had watched a year's work all disintegrating in a minute, at the call of bestial, loathsome, blood-hungry superstition.

And he was a man of iron, as Christian missionaries go. He had been hard bitten in his youth, and trained in a hard, grim school. In the Isle of Skye he had seen the little cabin where his mother lived pulled down to make more room for a fifty-thousand-acre deer forest. He had seen his mother beg.

He had worked his way to Edinburgh, toiled at starvation wages for the sake of leave to learn at night, burned midnight oil, and failed at the end of it, through ill health, to pass for his degree.

He had loved as only hard-hammered men can love, and had married after a struggle the very thought of which would have melted the courage of an ordinary man, only to see his wife die when her child was born. And even then, in that awful hour, he had not felt the utterness of misery such as came to him when he saw that his work in Howrah had all gone for nothing. He had given of his best, and all his best, and it seemed that he had given it for nothing.

"Who was that man, father?" asked a very weary voice, through which courage seemed to live yet, as the tiniest suspicion

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of a sweet refrain still lives through melancholy bars.

"The man who took your Home letters to Mohammed Gunga."

"And——"

"He has promised to try to find a man for me who will take my report on this awful business to the Commissioner at Abu."

"Father, listen! Listen, please!"

Rosemary McClean drew a chair for him and knelt beside him. Youth saved her face from being drawn as his, but the heat and horror had begun to undermine youth's powers of resistance. She looked more beautiful than ever, but no law lays down that a wraith shall be unlovely. She had tried the personal appeal with him a hundred times, and argument a thousand; now, she used both in a concentrated, earnest effort to prevail over his stubborn will. Her will was as strong as his, and yielded place to nothing but her sense of loyalty. There were not only Rajputs, as the Rajputs knew, who could be true to a high ideal.

"I am sure that whoever that man is, he must be the link between us and the safety Mohammed Gunga spoke of. Otherwise why does he stay behind? Native officers who have servants take their servants with them, as a rule."

"Well?"

"Give the word! Let us at least get in touch with safety."

"For myself, no. For you, yes. I have been weak with you, dear. I have let my selfish pleasure in having you near me overcome my sense of duty—that, and my faithless fear that you would not be properly provided for. I think, too, that I have never quite induced myself to trust natives sufficiently—even native gentlemen. You shall go, Rosemary. You shall go as soon as I can get word to Mohammed Gunga's man. Call that old woman in."

"Father, I will not go without you, and you know it! My place is with you, and I have quite made up my mind. If you stay, I stay. My presence here has saved your life a hundred times over. No, I don't mean just when you were ill; I mean that they dare not lay a finger on me. They know that a nation which respects their women would strike hard and swiftly to avenge a woman of its own. If I were to go away and leave you they would poison you, or stab you within a day, and then hold a mock trial and hang some innocent or other to blind the British Government. I would be a murderess if I left you here alone. Come! Come away!"

He shook his head.

"It was wrong of me ever to bring you here," he said sadly. "But I did not know —I would never have believed."

Then wrath took hold of him—the awful, cold anger of the Puritan, that hates evil as a concrete thing, to be ripped apart with steel.

"God's wrath shall burst on Howrah!" he declared. "Sodom and Gomorrah were no worse! Remember what befell them!"

"Remember Lot!" said Rosemary. "Come away!"

"Lot stayed on to the last and tried to warn them. I will warn the Commissioner! Here, give me my writing-things—where are they?"

He pushed her aside, none too gently, for the fire of a Covenanter's anger was blazing in his eyes.

"THERE are forty thousand British soldiers standing still, and wrong, black, shameful wrong, is being done! For a matter of gold, for fear of the cost in filthy lucre, they refrain from hurling wrong-doers in the dust! For the sake of dishonorable peace they leave these native States to misgovern themselves and stink to high heaven! Will God allow what they do? The shame and the sin is on England's head! Her statesmen shut their eyes and cry, 'Peace, peace,' where there is no peace! Her Queen sits idle on the throne while widows burn, screaming in the flames of superstitious priests.

"Men tell her, 'All is well; there is British rule in India!' They are too busy robbing widows in the Isle of Skye to lend an ear to the cries of India's widows. Corruption, superstition, murder, lies, black wrong, black selfishness, all growing rank beneath the shadow of the British rule! How long will God let that last?"

He was pacing up and down like a caged lion, not looking at Rosemary, not speaking to her—speaking to himself, and giving rein to all the rankling rage at wrong that wrong had nurtured in him since his boyhood. She knelt still by the chair, her eyes following him as he raged up and down the matted floor. She pitied him more than she did India.

When he took the one lamp at last, and

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set it where the light would fall above his writing pad, she left the room and went to stand at the street door, where the sluggish night air was a degree less stifling than in the mud-plastered, low-ceilinged room. As she stood there, a hand on each door post to remind her she was living in a concrete world, not a charred wisp swaying in the heat, a black thing rose out of the blackness, and the toothless hag held out a bony hand and touched her.

"Is it not time yet for the word to go?" she asked.

"No. No word yet, Joanna."

CHAPTER IX

Now, the gist of the thing is, be silent; be calm;
Be awake; be on hand on the day;
Be instant to heed the first note of alarm;
And—precisely—exactly—obey!

T. M.

THE dawn was barely breaking yet when things stirred in the little mission house. The flea-bitten gray pony was saddled by a sleepy *sais* and brought round from his open-sided thatch stable in the rear. The violet and mauve that precede the aching yellow glare of day were fading. A coppersmith began his everlasting *bong-bong-bong*, apparently reverberating from every direction. The last, almost indetectable, warm whiff of night wind moved and died away, and the monkeys in the near by baobab chattered it a requiem. Almost on the stroke of sunrise Rosemary McClean stepped out, settled her sun helmet—with a *moue* above the chin strap that was wasted on flat-bosomed black grandmotherdom and sulky groom—and mounted.

She needed no help. The pony stood as if he knew that the hot wind would soon dry the life out of him; and, though dark rings beneath dark eyes betrayed the work of heat and sleepless worry on a girl who should have graced the cool, sweet, rain-swept hills of Scotland, she had spirit left yet and an unspent store of youth. The *sais* seemed more weathered than the twenty-year-old girl, for he limped back into the smelly shelter of the servants' quarters to cook his breakfast and mumble about dogs and sahibs who prefer the sun.

She looked shrunken inside the riding-habit; not shriveled, for she sat too straight, but as if the cotton jacket had been made for a larger woman. If she seemed tired, and if a stranger might have guessed that her head ached until the chestnut curls were too heavy for it, she was still supple. And as she whipped the pony into an unwilling trot and old mission-named Joanna broke into a jog behind, revolt—no longer impatience, or discontent, or sorrow, but reckless rebellion—rode with her.

It was there, plain for the world to see, in the firm lines of a little Puritan mouth, in the angle of a high-held chin, in the set of a gallant little pair of shoulders. The pony felt it and leaned forward to a canter. Joanna scented, smelled or sensed in some manner known to Eastern old age, that purpose was afoot. This was to be no early morning canter, merely out and home again. There was no time now for the customary tricks of corner-cutting and rest-snatching under eaves. She tucked her head down and jogged forward in the dust, more like a dog than ever. It was a dog's silent, striving determination to be there when the finish came; a dog's disregard of all object or objective but his master's; but a long thrown stride, and a crafty, beady eye that promised more usefulness than a dog's when called on.

The first word spoken was when Rosemary drew rein a little more than half way along the palace wall.

"Are you tired yet, Joanna?"

"Uh-uh!" the woman answered, shaking her head violently, and pointing at the sun that mounted every minute higher. The argument was obvious. In less than twenty minutes the whole horizon would be shimmering again like shaken plates of brass. Wherever the other end might be, a rest would be better there than here! Her mistress nodded and rode on again, faster yet. She had learned long ago that Joanna could show a dusty pair of heels to almost anything that ran, and she had never yet known distance to tire the servant; it had been the thought of distance and speed combined that made her pause and ask.

She did not stop again until they had cantered up through the awakening bazaar, where unclean-looking merchants and their underlings rinsed out their teeth noisily above the gutters, and the pariah dogs had started nosing in among the muck for things unthinkable to eat. The sun had shortened up the shadows and begun to beat down through the gaps; the advance guard of the

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shriveling hot wind had raised foul dust eddies, and the city was ahum when she halted at last beside the big brick arch of the caravansary, where Mohammed Gunga's boots and spurs had caught her eye once.

"Now, Joanna!" She leaned back from the saddle, and spoke low, but with a certain thrill. "Go in there, find me Mohammed Gunga sahib's man, and bring him out here!"

"And if he will not come?"

The old woman seemed half afraid to enter.

"Go in, and don't come out without him —unless you want to see me go in by myself!"

The old woman looked at her piercingly, with eyes that gleamed from amid a bunch of wrinkles, then motioned with a skinny arm in the direction of an awning where shade was to be had from the dangerous early sun rays. She made no move to enter through the arch until her mistress had taken shelter.

FIFTEEN minutes later she emerged with Ali Partab—who looked sleepy, but still more ashamed of his unmilitary *dêshabillé*. Rosemary McClean glanced left and right, forgot about the awning and the custom which decrees aloofness, ignored the old woman's waving arm and Ali Partab's frown, and rode toward him eagerly.

"Did Mohammed Gunga sahib leave you here with any orders relative to me?" she asked.

The Rajput bowed.

"Before he went away he spoke to me of safety, and told me he would leave a link between me and men whom I may trust."

The Rajput bowed again. Neither of them saw an elbow laid on the window ledge of a room above the arch; it disappeared, and very gingerly a bared black head replaced it. Then the head, too, disappeared.

The girl's eyes sparkled as the reassurance came that at least one good fighting man was waiting to do nothing but assist her. For the moment she threw caution to the winds, and remembered nothing but her plight and her father's stubbornness.

"My father will not come away, but——"

Ali Partab's eyes betrayed no trace of concern.

"But — I thought —— Are you all alone?"

"All alone, Miss sahib, but your servant."

"Oh! I thought—perhaps that—" she checked herself, then rushed the words out, as if ashamed of them—"that, if you had men to help you, you might kidnap him and carry him away against his will. Where are these others who are to be trusted?"

Ali Partab grinned and drew himself up with a movement of polite dissent. It was not for him to question the suggestions of a Miss sahib; he conveyed that much with an inimitable air. But it was his business to keep strictly to the letter of his orders.

"Miss sahib, I can not do that. So said Mohammed Gunga. 'When the hag brings word, then take three horses and bear the Miss sahib and her father to my cousin Alwa's place.' I stand ready to obey; but the padre sahib comes not against his will."

"To whose place?"

"Alwa's, Miss sahib."

"And who is he?" She seemed bewildered. "I had hoped to be escorted to some British Residency."

"That would be for Alwa, should he see fit. He has men and horses and a fort that is impregnable. The Miss sahib would be safe there under all circumstances."

"But—but supposing I declined to accept that invitation. Supposing I preferred not to be carried off to a—er—a Mohammedan gentleman's fort. What then?"

"I could but wait here, Miss sahib, until the hour came when you changed your mind, or until Mohammed Gunga by letter or by word of mouth relieved me of my trust."

"Oh. Then you will wait here until I ask?"

"Surely, Miss sahib."

The head again peered through the window up above them, but disappeared below the ledge furtively, and none of the three were aware of it. For that matter, the old woman was gazing intently at Ali Partab and listening eagerly. He stood almost underneath the arch and Miss McClean was staring at him, frowning with the effort to translate her thoughts into a language that is very far from being easy. They would none of them have seen the roof descending on them.

"And—and won't you under any circumstances take us, say, to the Commissioner at Abu instead?"

"I may not, Miss sahib."

"But why?"

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"Of a truth I know not. I never yet knew Mohammed Gunga to give an order without good reason for it; but, beyond that he chose me because he said the task might prove difficult and he trusted me, I know nothing."

"Have you no idea of the reason?"

"Miss sahib, I am a soldier. To me an order is an order to be carried out; suspicions, fears, are nothing, unless they stand in the way of accomplishment. I await your word. I am ready. The horses are here—good horses, lean and hard. The order is that you must ask me."

"Thank you—er—I don't know your name—Ali what? Partab? Thank you, Ali Partab." The disappointment in her voice was scarcely more noticeable than the despondency her drooping figure showed. The little shoulders that had sat so square and gallantly seemed to have lost their strength, and there was none of the determined ring left in the words she hesitated for. "I—hope you will understand that I am grateful—but—I can not—er—see my way just yet to——"

"In your good time, Miss sahib. I was ordered to have patience!"

"At least I will have more confidence, knowing that you are always close at hand."

The Rajput bowed. She reined back. He saluted, and she bowed again; then with a glance to make sure that Joanna followed, she started back at little more than a walking pace—a dejected wraith of a girl on a dejected-looking pony, too overcome by the upsetting of her rebellious scheme to care, or even think, whether Joanna dropped out of sight or not.

ALI PARTAB watched her down the street, with a face that betrayed no emotion and no suspicion of what his thoughts might be. When she was out of sight he went back under the arch to attend to his three horses; and the moment that he did so a fat but very furtive Hindu took his place, glanced down the street once in the direction that Rosemary had taken, and then darted upstreet as fast as his shaking paunch would let him. He had been gone at the least ten minutes when Joanna, also furtive, also in a hurry, dodged here and there among the commencing surge of traffic, and approached the arch again.

It would be useless to try to read her mind or to translate the glitter of her beady eyes into thoughts intelligible to any but an Oriental. It was quite clear, though, that she wished not to be noticed, that she feared the occupants of the caravansary, and that she had returned for word with Ali Partab. He, least of all, would have doubted her intention of demanding the two gold mohurs, for it was she who had brought the word that Miss McClean wanted him. But what relation that intention had to her loyalty or treachery, or whether she were capable of either, capable of anything except greed and obedience for the sake of pay, were problems no man living could have guessed.

She asked the lounging sweeper by the arch whether Ali Partab had ridden out as yet. He jeered back outrageous improprieties, suggestive of impossible ambition on the hag's part. She called him "sahib," dubbed him "father of a dozen stalwart sons," returned a few of his immodest compliments with a flattering laugh, and learned that Ali Partab was still busy in the caravansary. Then she proceeded to make herself very inconspicuous beside a two-wheeled wagon, up-ended in the gutter opposite the arch, and waited with Eastern patience for the horseman to ride out.

She saw the fat Hindu come back, in no particular hurry now, and seat himself not far from her. Later she saw eight horsemen ride down the street, pass the arch, wheel, and halt. She noticed that they were not Maharaja Howrah's men, but a portion of his brother Jaimihr's bodyguard; then took no further notice of them. If they chose to wait there, it was no affair of hers, and to appear inquisitive would be to invite a lance butt, very shrewdly thrust where it would hurt.

It was an hour at least before Ali Partab rode out through the arch, looking down anxiously at his horse's off-hind, that had been showing symptoms of "brushing" lately. Joanna rose instantly to cross the street and intercept him, and recoiled just in the nick of time to save herself from being ridden down.

At a sign from the fat Hindu, the eight horsemen spurred and swooped upstreet with the speed and certainty of sparrow-hawks and the noise of devastation. They rode down Ali Partab, unhorsed him, bound him, threw him on his horse again, and

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galloped off before any but the Hindu had time to realize that he was their objective. He was gone—snatched like a chicken from the coop. Noise and dust were all the trace or explanation that he left. The mazy streets swallowed him. The Hindu waddled over to the arch and disappeared without a smile on his face to show even interest. The interrupted trading and bartering went on again, and no one commented or made a move to follow, but Joanna.

She watched the fat Hindu and made sure that she would recognize him anywhere again. Then, by a trail that no one would have guessed at and few could have followed, she made her way to Jaimihr's palace, three miles away from Howrah's, where a dozen sulky-looking sepoys lolled, dismounted, by the wooden gate. There was neither sight nor sound of mounted men, and the gate was shut; but in the middle of the roadway there was smoking dung, and there was a suspicion of overacting about the indifference of the guardians of the entrance.

There was no overacting, though, in what Joanna did. Nobody would have dreamed that she was playing any kind of part or was interested in anything at all except the coppers that she begged for. She squatted in the roadway, ink-black and clear-cut in the now blazing sunlight, alternately flattering them and pretending to a knowledge of unguessed-at witchcraft.

She was there still at midday when they changed the guard. She was there when night fell, still squatting in the roadway, still exchanging repartee and hints at the supernatural with armed men who shuddered now and then between their bursts of mockery. The sore, suffering dogs that sniff through the night for worse eyesores than themselves, whimpered and watched her. The guard changed, and the moon paled, but she stayed on; and whatever her purpose was, or whatever information it was that she obtained in fragments amid the raillery, she did not return to the mission house.

IT WAS not until Rosemary McClean returned and dismounted by the door that she realized Joanna had not kept pace. Even then she thought little of it; the old woman often lingered on the homeward way, when the chance of her being needed was remote. Two or three hours passed before the suspicion arose that anything might have happened to Joanna, and even then she might not have been remembered, had not Duncan McClean asked for her.

"I have changed my mind," he said, calling Rosemary into the long, low living-room. It was darkened to exclude the hot wind and the glare, and he looked like a ghost as he rose to meet her. "I have decided that my duty is to get away from this place for your sake and for the sake of the cause I have at heart. We are doing no good here. I can do most by going to the Commissioner or even to somebody higher up than him, and laying my case before him personally. Send for Joanna, and tell her to go and bring Mohammed Gunga's man."

It was then that they missed Joanna and began to search for her. But no Joanna came. It was then that Rosemary McClean rehearsed with her father her former conversation with Mohammed Gunga, and part, at least, of her recent one with Ali Partab, and the missionary started off himself to find the horseman whom Mohammed Gunga had so thoughtfully left behind.

But he very naturally found no Ali Partab. What he did discover was that he was followed; that a guard, unarmed but obvious, was placed around the mission house; that his servants, all except the cook, deserted one by one; that no more children came to the mission school.

He decided to take chances and ride off with his daughter in the night. But the ponies went mysteriously lame, and nobody would lend or sell him horses on any terms whatever. He did his best to get a letter through to anywhere where there were British, but nobody would take it. And then Jaimihr came, swaggering with his escort, to offer him and his daughter the hospitality of his palace.

He declined that offer a little testily, for the insolence behind the offer was less than half concealed. Jaimihr sneered as he rode away.

"Perhaps a month or two of undisturbed enjoyment will induce the padre sahib to change his mind about my invitation!" he said nastily. And he made no secret, then, as he ordered them about before he went, that the men who lounged and watched at every vantage point were his.

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CHAPTER X

They looked into my eyes and laughed—
But what when I was gone?
Have strong men made me one of them?
Or do I ride alone?

T. M.

ON THE morning after Mohammed Gunga's daring experiment with Cunningham's nervous system, he was anxious, to say the least of it; and that is only another way of saying that he was irritable. He watched the Englishman at breakfast on the *dak* bungalow veranda, with a sidewise restless glance that gave the lie a dozen times over to his assumed air of irascible authority.

"We will see now what we will see," he muttered to himself. "Those who know such a lot imagine that the test is made. They forget that there be many brave men, of whom but a few are fit to lead. Now, *now*, we will see!"

And he kept on repeating that assurance to himself with the air of a man who would like to be assured, but is not, while he ostentatiously found fault with every single thing on which his eyes lit.

"One would think that the Rissaldar sahib was afraid of consequences!" whispered the youngest of his followers, stung to the quick by a quite unmerited rebuke. "Does he fear that *Chota* Cunnigan will beat him?"

White men have been known, often, to do stupider things than that, and particularly young white men who have not yet learned to gage proportions accurately; so there was nothing really ridiculous in the suggestion. A young white man who has had his temper worked up to the boiling-point, his nerves deliberately racked, and then has been subjected to the visit of a driven tiger, may be confidently expected to exhibit all the faults of which his character is capable.

To make the situation even more ticklish, Cunningham's servant, in his zeal for his master's comfort, had forgotten to sham sickness, and instead of limping was in abominably active evidence. He was even doing more than was expected of him. Ralph Cunningham had said nothing to him —had not needed to; every single thing that a pampered sahib could imagine that he needed was done for him in the proper order, without noise or awkwardness, and the Rissaldar cursed as he watched the clockwork-perfect service. He had hoped for a lapse that might call forth some pointer, either by way of irritation or amusement, as to how young Cunningham was taking things.

But not a thing went wrong and not a sign of any sort gave Cunningham. The youngster did not smile, either to himself darkly, or at his servant. He lit his after-breakfast cigar and smoked it peacefully, as if he had spent an absolutely normal night, without even a dream to worry him, and if he eyed Mohammed Gunga at all, he did it so naturally, and with so little interest, that no deductions could be drawn from it. He was neither more nor less than a sahib at his ease, which was disconcerting, very, to the Oriental mind.

He smoked the cigar to a finish, without a word or sign that he wished to give audience. Then his eyes lit for the first time on the tiger skin, which was pegged out tight, raw side upward, for the sun to sterilize. He threw the butt of his cigar away and strolled out to examine the skin without a sign to Mohammed Gunga, counted the claws one by one to make sure that no superstitious native had purloined any of them, and returned to his chair on the veranda without a word.

"Is he vindictive, then?" wondered Mohammed Gunga. "Is he a mean man? Will he bear malice and get even with me later on? If so——"

"Present my compliments to Mohammed Gunga sahib, and ask him to be good enough to——"

The Rissaldar heard the order and was on his way to the veranda before the servant started to convey the message. He took no chances on a reprimand about his shoes, for he swaggered up in big boots which no soldier can be asked to take off before he treads on a private floor; and he saluted like a soldier, all dignity. It was the only way by which he could be sure to keep the muscles of his face from telling tales.

"HUZOOR!"

"Morning, Mohammed Gunga. Take a seat, won't you?"

A camp-chair creaked under the descending Rajput's weight, and creaked again as he remembered to settle himself less stiffly —less guiltily.

"I say, I'm going to ask you chaps to do me a favor. You don't mind obliging me now and then, do you?"

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The youngster leaned forward confidentially, one elbow on his knee and looked half serious, as if what he had to ask were more important than the ordinary.

"Sahib, there is nothing that we will not do."

"Ah. Then you won't mind my mentioning this, I'm sure. Next time you want to kennel a tiger in my bedroom, d'you mind giving me notice in advance? It's not the stink I mind, nor being waked up: it's the deuced awful risk of hurting somebody. Besides, look how I spoilt that tiger's mask. The skins I've always admired at home had been shot where it didn't show so badly."

There was not even the symptom of a smile on Cunningham's face. He looked straight into Mohammed Gunga's eyes and spoke as one man talking calm common sense to another. He raised his hand as the Rajput began to stammer an apology.

"No. Don't apologize. If you'll forgive me for shooting your pet tiger, I'll overlook the rest of it. If I'd known that you kept him in there o' nights, I'd have chosen another room, that's all—some room where I couldn't smell him, and where I wouldn't run the risk of killing an inoffensive man. Why, I might have shot you! Think how sorry I'd have been!"

The Rissaldar did not quite know what to say; so, wiser than most, he said nothing.

"Oh, and one other matter. I don't speak much of the language yet, so would you mind translating to my servant that the next time he goes sick without giving me notice and without putting oil in my lamp, I'll have him fed to the tiger before he's brought into my room? Just tell him that quietly, will you? Say it slowly, so that it sinks in. Thanks."

Straight-faced as Cunningham himself, the Rissaldar tongue-lashed the servant, with harsh, tooth-rasping words that brought him up to attention. Whether he interpreted or not the exact meaning of what Cunningham had said, he at least produced the desired effect; the servant mumbled apologetic nothings and slunk off the veranda backward—to go away and hold his sides with laughter at the back of the *dak* bungalow. There Mohammed Gunga found him afterward and administered a thrashing—not, as he was careful to explain, for disobedience, but for having dared to be amused at the Rissaldar's discomfiture.

But there was still one point that weighed heavily on Mohammed Gunga's mind as the servant shuffled off and left him alone face to face with Cunningham. There is as a very general rule not more than one man-eating tiger in a neighborhood, and not even the greenest specimen of subaltern new-brought from home would be likely to mistake one for the other kind. The man-eater was dead, and there was an engagement to shoot one that very morning. He hesitated, said nothing for the moment, and wondered whether his best course would be to go ahead and pretend to beat out the jungle and tell some lie or other about the tiger having got away. But Ralph Cunningham, with serious gray eyes fixed full on his, saved him the trouble of deciding.

"If it's all one to you, Mohammed Gunga," he said, the corner of his mouth just flickering, "we'll move on from here at once. This is a beastly old bungalow to sleep in, and shooting tigers don't seem so terribly exciting to me. Besides, the climate here must be rotten for the horses."

"As you wish, sahib."

"Very well. If the choice rests with me, I wish it. It might—ah—save the villagers a lot of hard work beating through the jungle, mightn't it? Besides, there'll be other tigers on the road."

"Innumerable tigers, sahib."

"Good. Will you order a start, then?"

THE Rissaldar departed around the corner of the bungalow, and a minute or two later Cunningham's ears caught the sound of a riding-switch lustily applied and of muffled groans. He suspected readily enough what was going on, particularly since his servant was not in evidence; but he dared not laugh on the veranda. He went inside and made believe to be busy with his bag before he relaxed the muscles of his face.

"Now, I wonder whether I handled that situation rightly?" he asked himself between chuckles. "One thing I know: if that old ruffian plays another trick on me—one more of any kind—I'll show my teeth. There's a thing known as the limit!"

He would not have wondered, though, if he could have overheard Mohammed Gunga less than an hour later. The Rissaldar had stayed behind to make sure nothing had been forgotten, and one of his men remained with him.

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"There be sahibs and then sahibs," said Mohammed Gunga. "Two kinds are the worst—those who strike readily in anger, and use bad language when annoyed, and those whose lips are thin, and who save their vengeance to be wreaked later on. They are worse, either of them, than the sahib who is usually drunk."

"And Cunnigan?"

"Is altogether otherwise. As his father was, and as a few other sahibs I have met, he understands what is not spoken, concedes dignity to him who is caught napping, as one who, having disarmed his adversary, allows him to recover his weapon, and——"

"And?"

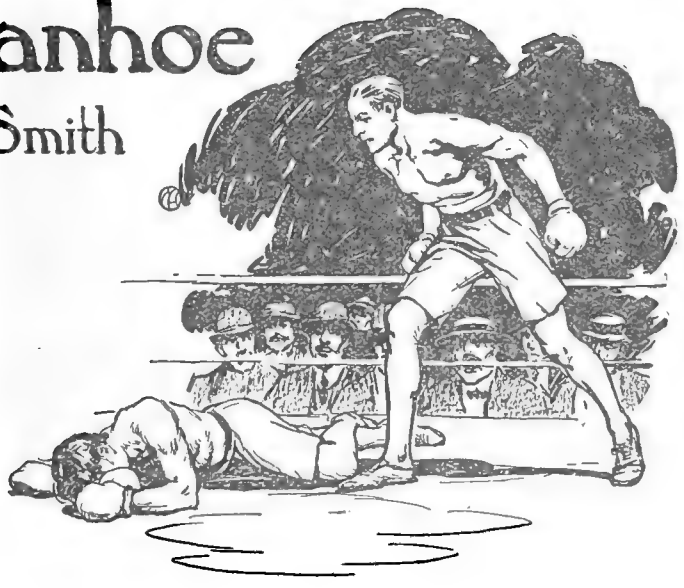
"Proves himself a man worth following! I myself will slit the throat of any man I catch disparaging the name of *Chota* Cunnigan Bahadur! By the blood of God, by my medals, my own honor, and the good name of *Pukka* Cunnigan his father, I swear it!"

"*Rung Ho!*" grinned the six-foot son of war who rode beside him.

TO BE CONTINUED

Kid Ivanhoe

By Frank L. Smith



AS HE kneeled to lace his shabby ring shoes, two big tears rolled down his cheeks and splashed on his arms. It seemed to him that he must voice his grief in an anguished cry, but he choked back the sobs and bent closer to his task, lest Joe might think he was afraid. Short, square and swart, his twisted and flattened nose and "tin" ears giving ample testimony to the age-long minutes he had spent in the ring, Joe thumped his friend on the back and whispered encouragement in accents strangely tender.

"Buck up, Pete. Get togeder. Don'cha worry. You'll be back here in a minute, countin' de iron men. Why, you can clean house wit' any o' t'ese mutts! Buck up, Petey."

From the hall above came the roar of many voices and the thunder of many feet. For there was to be an extra big show that night. "For-tay two roun's o' boxin'" had been promised—six preliminary bouts, three of four rounds and three of six rounds each, and then the big event, a twelve-round mill between the two best middleweights in the world. At last the much harangued match had been made, and sidestepping by the champions would be confined to the ring. Pat Gilday, the shifty Milwaukee Ghost, who had not permitted

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boxing to interfere with his vaudeville work since he won the honors in his class, was to meet the hard-hitting, enduring T'pedo Morgan, late of the British Navy, pride of all England and holder of the Lord Hinsdale Belt, emblematic of the Continental Middleweight Championship.

All the fight fans of New York, and large delegations from the West, were gathering to see the big mill. To be sure, the fight was limited to twelve rounds, and no decision could be given by the referee. But the supporters of each man were confident that their hero would win by the knockout route, and anyhow, a consensus from the sporting editors of the morning papers would suffice in the event that the bout was close.

Through three entrances the tide of sport lovers flowed into the hall hired for the occasion by the Richmond A. C. The three, five and seven dollar seats were rapidly filling, and already the police reserves were gathering outside to console and control the disappointed fans unable to gain entrance. Neither the Ghost nor T'pedo had arrived. The principals are prone to be leisurely about appearing on the scene of action.

In the basement under the arena, canvas curtains formed the dressing-rooms, one for each of the headliners and one for the twelve preliminary fighters, who, with their army of seconds and handlers, quite filled the space. Without exception the members of this retinue wore their sweaters tucked into the tops of their belted trousers, and offered advice freely and loudly. Delivered in four languages and several mongrel dialects, this noisy counsel produced a deafening babel.

While Joe bound strips of tape around his fingers, Pete looked about him with a feeling of disgust. The atmosphere was foul, as the basement was poorly ventilated, and the odor of many liniments and sweaty bodies and clothing mingled to produce a result far from pleasing. And the rough, profane remarks grated on Pete's tortured nerves. He was a slender lad, although well muscled, and his thin, almost ascetic face, markedly Polish, was strangely out of place in that room. He wondered against whom he would be pitted, and singling out one pugilist after another, tried to imagine him as his opponent, and considered the chances for success.

THEN the club match-maker, stout, red-faced, capable, hurried in. He read a list of names and weights from a paper, and one by one the aspirants for fistic honors stepped forward, their cohorts edging in closely to advise and to see that justice was done. Without waste of words the match-maker made his selections and announced the bouts. Pete listened carefully, but was unable to catch the name of his opponent to be. His work completed, the match-maker departed, and the babel of voices began again. Joe routed a sullen loafer from the beer case that had served Pete as a chair.

"Sit down, Pete. You gotta keep off your feet, y'know."

"Who do I fight, Joe?"

"That stiff, Casey, over there—him with the purkle tights and green bat'robe. I seen him fight at t' Harlem A. C. He's got two pounds on yuh, but y'can knock him cold."

Pete eyed the man he was to meet, and shivered. Joe buttoned his coat tightly about his charge and threw a sweater over his shoulders. For a time the two sat in silence, waiting. To Pete it seemed that the first bout never would start and he was anxious to be over with the distasteful ordeal of his own seeking. As the memory of his sorrow became more poignant, he trembled and shivered. Joe watched him, a wealth of sympathy in his close-set eyes, and when Pete brushed away the tears with his tape-bound knuckles, Joe sought to encourage him. They were alone in the crowded room.

Suddenly the Secretary darted in, shouted two names and was gone. The first event might well have been a battle royal, to judge from the number of men who responded to the call. Closely surrounding their heroes, fourteen handlers and seconds detached themselves from the throng and moved out. Their final counsel, accompanied by much profanity, floated back to those in the dressing-room, and then was lost in the general roar from above. An eternity of waiting; then a distant gong clanged faintly. The first bout was on.

Pete checked off the rounds by the bell almost directly over his head. Soon after the beginning of the third period, there came a clamor of applause. Dust from the rafters over their heads settled down on the waiting men. With feet, hands and shouts

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the fans were sounding their enthusiasm.

"Somebody got his," Joe observed, and Pete turned toward the door. A short wait, then——

"He won all right, all right," said Joe, and pointed.

Beaming happily and swaying under the weight of congratulatory buffets delivered by all who could reach him, the winner strode into the room. Then another party entered. They were quiet and sullen, the new arrivals, and supported the limp, lax form of the loser. Blood from his cut lips and nose streaked his body and arms, his head swung loosely from side to side as if his neck were too weak to support it, his face was puffed and bleeding, his ears strangely swollen. He was conscious, but seemed tired, and sank heavily down on a camp-stool. His handlers sponged his face and massaged his stomach, but he appeared not to know what they did.

"He took an awful beatin' in a few minutes, eh?" said Joe.

But Pete did not answer. He was wondering if he would be carried from the ring in the same condition, wondering in which direction the tide of his battle would flow. Again he looked at young Casey. His opponent was surveying him at that moment, and as their eyes met, Casey looked away and sneered. Something he said to his seconds caused them to laugh loudly and to cast contemptuous glances at Pete.

Already the men for the second bout were mounting the stairs to the arena. The suspense was short. To the surprise of all in the dressing-room they returned almost instantly. Jeers and hoots from the fans above told part of the story. They had been disqualified in the second round, chased from the ring because of their awkward and amateurish performance. And now, in the sanctum of the dressing-room, they sought to explain to any one who would listen. For a moment Pete forgot his own troubles in his wonderment. One of the disqualified men had seemed the best of the lot. He bore every indication of the seasoned fighter and had been loud in his tributes to his own prowess before he entered the ring. And now he was shunned, disgraced in the eyes of his companions.

Then it occurred to Pete that he, too, might be disqualified because of his lack of skill. To be sure, he knew many of the fine points of the game and was quick, alert, strong and heady. But he had never fought in public before, and he feared lest his nerve desert him.

Two bouts followed in quick succession, but he grew more and more impatient at the delay. Would the time never come? To him it seemed that he could no longer control his emotions, that he would break down completely if his bout were not called next. The anxiety, the suspense, the distaste for the atmosphere, and the sorrow which ate at his heart, made him tremble nervously.

Then appeared the manager, who spoke briefly and briskly. There was to be only one more preliminary contest, as the hour was late and the fans were clamoring for T'pedo and the Ghost. Pete was almost stunned by the announcement, but made his way to the manager and begged to be allowed to fight. His words sounded strange in his ears, that he should plead for the privilege of fighting when the thought of the conflict almost nauseated him. The manager was very businesslike and carefully looked over the remaining fighters, trying to select the likeliest pair. Casey grinned familiarly and waved his hand.

"Lemme fight the Pole, Nelson," he said. "I can clean him up in two rounds."

Casey had fought well for the Club on several occasions, was known to many of the fans and had a considerable contingent of friends in the house. The manager assented.

"All right. Hurry it up, you guys."

CASEY and his handlers gathered up their towels, sweaters and bottles. Pete and his lone friend sped for the door, fearing that the manager might change his mind. As they climbed the stairs, Pete in his short blue trunks, a coat buttoned about him—for a bathrobe was an unknown luxury—looked puny and ridiculous. Joe strode by his side, carrying the battered, gaping suitcase containing Pete's street clothes.

"I wouldn't trust 'at hungry bunch down stairs wit' your clo'es, Pete", he said. "Paddy Magee had to go home in an *Evenin' Telegram* last mont'."

Pete smiled faintly and then clenched his teeth for the ordeal of entering the arena. At first he could see little, as the hall was badly ventilated and a thick haze of tobacco smoke filled the air. In the center, in the glare of low-hung, hooded calcium

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lights, the ring gleamed skeleton white. But the structure with its brightly limned ropes and posts reminded Pete of a gallows. Every seat in the hall was occupied, and at each end men crowded and jostled to get good positions. As Pete and his second shouldered their way to the ring, the men lining the aisle voiced various comments.

"He looks like he was at his own funeral!"

"School's let out. Have you studied your lessons well, little man?"

"Pick up your feet, you'll step on 'em!"

"Going to serve soup out of that bag, Jack?"

"Who's the lady you got with you, Ignatz?"

Joe pushed Pete steadily forward, repeating incessantly—

"Doncha mind 'em Pete. To——wit' 'em!"

And as they drew near the ring:

"Gees, Pete, look a' t' guys in t' ten-dollar seats! I betcha dey's t'irty t'ousend dollars in t' house."

Thirty thousand dollars! The figures meant nothing to Pete. If he won he would receive five dollars for his efforts. What did these men care about him? As he looked about he believed that every man in the house, with the exception of Joe, hoped he would be knocked out.

At the ring both boys hesitated, for it was solidly banked with newspapermen and telegraph operators. Then the announcer leaned over the ropes and indicated where they were to climb.

"Keep yer eye on dis grip, will ya, fellas?" asked Joe, placing the suitcase between two reporters. They nodded and he followed Pete into the ring. Pete sank down on the nearest stool and Joe knelt to rub his legs. The canvas in the corner where they were had been soaked with water used by preceding handlers, and Joe swore loudly and cautioned Pete not to wet his shoes lest they slip during the fight. Already Pete's eyes smarted from the glare of the light and the smoke-fouled air.

Casey, followed by six handlers, entered the ring and took possession of the opposite corner. Closely wrapped in his green bathrobe, he threw himself back almost in a reclining position, his body supported by the stool, his legs stretched out before him, his arms extended along the ropes. His seconds darted for the center of the ring, and Joe, noting the move, followed suit. They squabbled over the gloves, which lay where they had been discarded at the close of the last fight. Joe bore the better pair to Pete in triumph.

At the long table almost directly beneath them, telegraph operators were tuning up their instruments and sport writers were impatiently awaiting the finish of the prelims, for the principals had arrived and were ready to meet. Then the announcer approached Pete and asked his name.

"Peter Ivanhulski."

"Peter wot?"

"Ivanhulski."

After interviewing Casey, the announcer stepped to the ropes and raised his derby hat high in the air. The gong clanged and the crowd quieted for the moment.

"The next bout on the card will be a six-round go for the lightweight championship of Avenyuh A!"

A cheer and a roar of laughter greeted the sally. Backing into the center of the ring, the announcer indicated Pete with his derby.

"In this cor-nah—Kid——" He hesitated. "Kid Ivanhoe, one hundred and thirty-one and one-half! In this cor-nah—Bearcat Casey, the pride of Harlem, one hundred and thirty-five pounds!"

As his name was called each boxer half rose and nodded. Casey's name was greeted with yells and a terrific din of cowbells. Pete's was received in silence.

The gong clanged again. The announcer skipped nimbly through the ropes. Casey threw off his bathrobe and Pete his coat. The referee, a stout, grim-faced man in shirtsleeves, beckoned them to the center. Neither boy appeared to be aware of the presence of the other. They shook hands and listened to the referee, who cautioned them about foul tactics.

At that moment there was an interruption. Nearly a hundred men in the three-dollar-admission enclosure had been swaying against the frail barrier that separated them from the more expensive seats. Suddenly the fence was crashed down and the crowd surged across it like stampeded cattle. The special police and club attendants were swept aside and almost without resistance the men scrambled in and mingled with the legitimate seat holders, grinning broadly in their triumph. Unable to single out an offender and dislodge him, the officials looked on in disgust. Then a timid young man, who had refrained from

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joining in the first rush, sought to cross the broken barrier, whistling and looking about in affected indifference. But the police seized on the luckless youth as the object of their wrath. Squirming and protesting, he was hustled from the hall.

Chafing at the delay, Pete had resumed his seat, an expression of pain on his face. Those at the press table saw him dig a gloved fist at his eyes, as if to brush away tears.

"CLANG!"

They jumped from their corners, met in the center of the canvas, touched hands and crouched low. Casey, the taller of the two, looked an easy victor. His movements indicated previous experience. Pete seemed ignorant of the first principles of boxing, standing heavily, feet wide apart, his arms swinging loosely.

Casey feinted quickly and shot over a left for the jaw. Mechanically Pete blocked the blow, then turned to face his dancing adversary. Blow after blow he blocked in the same deliberate manner, but made no effort to counter. A strange numbness gripped him. He did not want to hit his opponent. Occasionally he could hear a faraway voice that seemed familiar, exhorting him—

"Wake up dere, Pete, wake up!"

Then the voice trailed away and was lost. For a flash he thought the noise in the hall was deafening. Then it vanished suddenly and he heard the scrape of Casey's shoes on the canvas. It occurred to him that he was on a white raft, floating on a sea of bobbing faces, and that Casey was attempting to drive him overboard.

From the rear of the hall came a shout from a man who favored Pete because he liked the color of his trunks.

"Have at him, Ivanhoe! Smite him with your sword!"

Casey's cohorts replied with yells and dinning cowbells.

"Come on dere, Casey. He's a dead man. Push him over!"

A stinging blow on the mouth brought Pete to his senses. While the blood tingled nauseatingly in his nose, he returned the jab. A haymaker it was, and "he picked it up on the floor," but the long, heavy swing reached the mark, and Casey's head flew back almost to his shoulder-blades.

"Yow-ee! Wow! Whe-ee!" the crowd cheered. The bout promised blood in plenty.

"Dat's a boy, Ivinghoe—come on dere, Casey!"

The two swapped punches swiftly, then clinched. As the referee broke them, the gong rang.

Pete slumped wearily down on his stool, and with frantic haste Joe tried to do the work of three handlers, sponging him, massaging his legs, holding a bottle to his mouth, and fanning him with a towel. As he worked he delivered advice and encouragement in jerky sentences.

"Fine work, Pete—keep your eye on his left—slip in anoder dome crusher—don't let him get too close—he'll chew you up—keep pokin' at him—you can get him easy!"

Pete smiled wanly.

"I feel kinder dead, Joe, but I guess I'll wake up in a minute."

Casey, surrounded by a fast-working crew, was smiling and talking to a reporter at the press table. A nonchalant wave of a gloved fist indicated that Ivanhoe would be carried home in a bucket after the close of the next round.

At the gong, Casey leaped across the ring and Pete was challenged in his own corner. But Casey's rush was more spectacular than effective. They sparred for a moment; then, slipping on the wet canvas, tumbled in a ridiculous heap. As they regained their feet the fans howled with glee. Angered by the miscarriage of his plan to slaughter Pete, Casey swung wildly at his opponent. Pete covered up and waited for the storm to abate. Unable to slip through his guard, Casey danced in impotent rage.

Of a sudden Pete lowered his arms and landed right and left in quick succession on the Harlem boy's ribs. Borne slowly backward, Casey rallied at the ropes, and foot to foot the two slugged each other. Their efforts threw them off their balance. Both tottered, then fell on the lower rope. Feet in the ring, their shoulders supported by the men in the ringside seats, the two swung wild blows at each other. Then the referee hauled them back into the ring and the spectators cheered wildly. Why, this scrap was as good as a burlesque show!

"Sometimes y'see some good mills in these prelims," said a fat man in a ten-dollar seat to his neighbor.

"Right. No science, but lots of action. Hope the main go is as good as this."

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"Yeh. This boy Ivanhoe will get his, though. He acts like he was etherized, most of the time."

In the ring the referee was struggling to part the fighters. Clinched in each other's grasp they wrestled and viciously tried to tear loose. As they broke, Casey whipped a hard left to Pete's mouth, followed by a terrific right jolt to the wind. Pete staggered and gave way. Again he was forced to cover up.

When the gong rang he seemed dazed, and Joe had to shove him to his corner.

"Come on, Pete, buck up! For gee's sake soak him! You gotta get t'next four rounds straight. You can win t' money. Keep after him! Cave in his dome an' you got him!"

Pete did not reply, but rinsed his mouth and panted heavily. The fight was draining his strength. His arms ached cruelly from the blows he had blocked, and he could feel a separate and distinct pain in a dozen places on his body. One eye was cut; his lips were mashed; but the blood on his shoulders was not from his own wounds. In the clinches, Casey had rested his head on Pete's neck, trying to stanch the flow from his bleeding nose.

"They take an awful grueling for the money, these boys," said the fat man to his friend.

"Yeh, but they don't feel it much; no brains, y'know."

AS PETE leaped up at the gong, Joe flung water from a sponge on his back. The shock seemed to rouse him and he forced the fighting all the way. A right to the wind and a left jolt over the heart forced Casey back, and, retreating from the punishment, he struck the ropes. As from a great spring he was thrown forward and walked into a jaw crusher. He took the count of nine on his knees. Then rising, he circled warily about Pete. Both men were bleeding profusely. The crowd registered its approval of the fight in thunderous cheers.

"Right after him Pete! Kill him! You can do it!" screamed Joe, crouching behind a corner of the ring, his head on a level with the canvas.

"What's wrong with friend Pete? I noticed he was crying when the mill started."

Joe turned to look into the face of the idol of the fight fans, Durland, the Sporting Editor of the *Sentinel*—Durland, whose cartoons and able stories were known to sporting men throughout the country.

"His old man was killed yesterday, an' Pete ain't got a nickel in t' house. Dis is his first scrap and he needs t' money."

At that moment Pete's chances for the money seemed very slim. Casey had found him wide open and had swung a smashing blow to his jaw. Pete dropped; then, as he slowly rose, Joe squirmed frantically and shrieked—

"Buck up, Pete!"

Casey, keen to follow up his advantage, crashed a stiff left at the groggy Pete, then swung back his right, quivering in his anxiety to send home the knockout. But the bell saved Pete and he tottered wearily to his stool.

"Now, Pete, we gotta do it!" said Joe, as he swung the towel fanwise. "We gotta knock him out—we need 'at money—give him bot' barrels!"

"I don't like to hit him hard, Joe."

"My gee, man! He'll kill ya if y'don't! Dis here is a prize fight an' don'cha forget it. Now jump in an' whale him!"

When the gong clanged for the fourth round and Joe leaped from the ring, Durland got the story from him in excited snatches.

The elder Ivanhulski was a laborer. While working in an excavation he had been crushed by a steel girder. The contractors made a brief announcement that another "Italian" had been killed, and sent the body to a morgue. Pete had lived with his father and a little sister; the mother was dead. His job as a helper on a delivery wagon didn't bring in much money and it was in the hope of winning a much needed five dollars that he was fighting.

"He's tough an' strong," Joe concluded. "He used t' box every night in t' back lots, but he ain't right for dis game. He's got too much brains an' he's too dreamy. He can play a fiddle. And he feels so bad about his old man 'at he's all in."

Then Joe waved his arms and screamed—

"Dat a boy, Pete! Hand it to him!"

Pete was forcing Casey across the ring, whipping in short-arm jolts. From all sections of the house came excited shouts.

"Fine work there, Ivinghoe, slip it over!"

"Hey you, Casey, where yuh goin'? Brace up!"

And one small voice insistently begged, beseeched, entreated—

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"In der beezer, Casey, slam him in der beezer!"

At the ropes Casey fought back, but was obliged to clinch. Pete shook him off; then—

"There it goes—there it goes!"

That dread cry that heralds the knockout was raised by hundreds of fans. And it did go. Pete took a step backward, and Casey lowered his guard for an instant. Then, swiftly and surely, Pete drove his right to the jaw. Casey turned almost slowly on his heels, and fell face downward near the ropes. It was a clean knockout, the best seen at the Club in years.

Joe was in the ring in an instant, hugging Pete, laughing, crying, bellowing his congratulations. But Pete shook him off and turned to help carry the senseless Casey to his corner.

AS THE two boys slipped through the ropes and hurried toward the dressing-room, the men near the aisle turned to watch them and applauded heartily. Pete scarcely heard them, and continued on his way, head forward in a dejected attitude not customary with winning fighters. Almost every man in the hall was standing, stretching his legs and stamping his feet preparatory to settling down for the final bout. They had been very tolerant with the preliminary men; in fact they were rather pleased with Kid Ivanhoe's performance in particular. But now they hoped to see some clever, scientific fighting.

As the boys disappeared in the rear of the hall, Durland climbed into the ring and spoke quietly to the announcer. One of the Nelson brothers, promoters of the show, was summoned, and the three consulted for a moment.

Then the gong rang and the announcer held up his hand for silence.

"Gentlemen, I take great pleasure in introducing the champion sporting editor of the world. I guess you all know him at that—Mr. Lewis Durland!"

The fans cheered lustily. Durland waited until the tumult died.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I never made a speech before in my life, and I won't bother to apologize any further—but I want to tell you that you have just witnessed a remarkable exhibition of grit. Peter Ivanhulski—Kid Ivanhoe—has just fought and won his first ring battle, and I know you will agree with me when I say that he put up a fine, clean scrap. His father lies dead in the Bellevue Morgue, and it was to win a little money to help bury him that Peter fought here to-night. He was crying when he climbed through the ropes, boys. He is not a born fighter. He has imagination and he didn't enjoy the work.

"Opponents of boxing exhibitions have said that fight fans are brutal men who clamor for blood. I don't think so and I reckon you all know I have been pretty friendly to the game. Now boys, I'm going to ask you to show your speed. I'm going to ask you to dig down and give what you can to help this poor boy who put up such a game scrap. I will start the ball rolling with fifty dollars. The Nelson brothers wish me to say they will give a like amount. Now men, go south and kick in with what you can spare. I thank you!"

That the fans approved of the suggestion was shown by their applause. Knockout Bradley, the lightweight champion, and four other prominent pugilists were delegated as collectors. As they went through the aisles, men who had urged Casey to kill Pete tossed handfuls of bills and silver into the hats. The crown of Bradley's derby was torn from the brim by the weight of the collection, and the other men were nearly as fortunate, or unfortunate.

The dressing room was deserted as Pete and Joe entered. All the other fighters and their henchmen were waiting in the hall above to see the final bout. Pete sat down on a stool and rested his head in his hands. Joe threw his coat over him, then remembered that he had left the suitcase at the ringside.

"I'll be right back here, Pete," he said, and started for the stairs. Then Casey entered with his retinue, and staggered weakly to a stool, his seconds glowering at Pete. But the Harlem lad, fast recovering from the effects of the last blows, grinned and beckoned.

"You got the punch, Kid," he said, offering his hand. "Where you from? I've never seen you scrap before."

Pete gripped his hand.

"I never fought in a ring before and I'm all through with the game now. How do you feel?"

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"Oh, sorter loose an' heavy-like. Hope we meet up again. I gotta few stunts I'd like to try out on you."

Pete smiled faintly and shook his head.

"I won't fight any more. I don't think I would be as lucky next time."

"Where's your handlers? Here, Steve, sponge him off!"

Much against his will, Steve sponged the blood from Pete's body and face, and dried him with a towel. Pete resumed his stool and wondered why Joe didn't return. He was anxious to get away. It seemed to him that he was not paying the proper respect to his dead father, and he wanted to be at home with his sister.

Casey was sponged off and hurried into his clothes, for his seconds were eager to get good places for the big fight and Casey was just as desirous to see the Ghost and T'pedo clash. When he was dressed, he called, "So long, Kid, no hard feelin's," and hurried out.

JOE returned to find Pete as he had left him, elbows on knees, his bowed head in his hands.

"It's all right, Petey, get togeder. A guy is goin' t'get your bag for us, an' den we'll blow."

"You don't suppose they'll hold out the money on us, do you, Joe?"

"Oh we'll get the five all right," said Joe. "I'll grab it off for you." Then he added:

"Gee, Kid, 'at was a swell fight you put up. Gee, I could take yuh and clean up t' town wit' yuh! Y'orter stick to t' game, Kid!"

But Pete shook his head sadly and said nothing. Then Billy Nelson appeared in the doorway with the suitcase.

"Here's your bag, son, and you'll find something inside for being game."

He watched the two as they stared open-mouthed at the bills and coins jammed loosely in the grip. Then he explained about the collection.

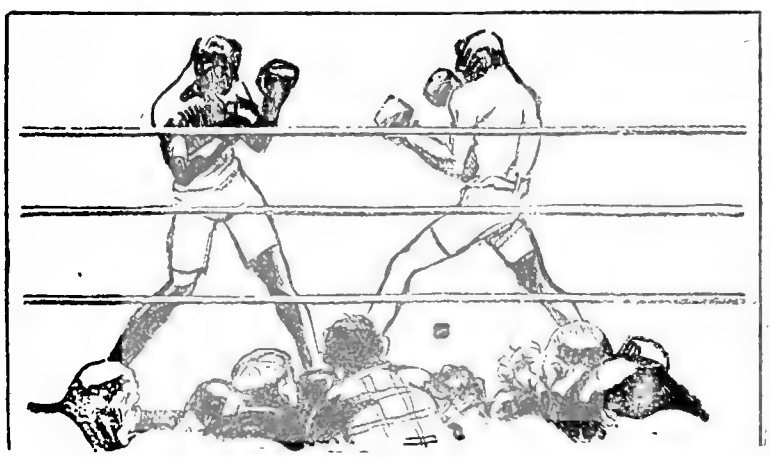
"Is it all right to take the money, Joe?"

"Sure t'ing, Pete. And say, Mr. Nelson, we're much obliged; an' will you t'ank t' boys for us?"

"I'll thank them for you. You boys better hurry home now. I'll keep the money in the safe to-night for you, or I'll send a cop along with you, just as you like. And here," he added, giving Pete a five dollar bill, "don't forget your prize coin. You certainly earned it."

They elected to take the money with them. When they passed through the rear of the arena on their way out, they saw that the Ghost and T'pedo were in their corners awaiting the gong. At that moment, Durland, whose seat was near the Ghost's corner, was shaking hands with the Milwaukee marvel.

"Kill him, Pat," he said. "I've got my money on you!"



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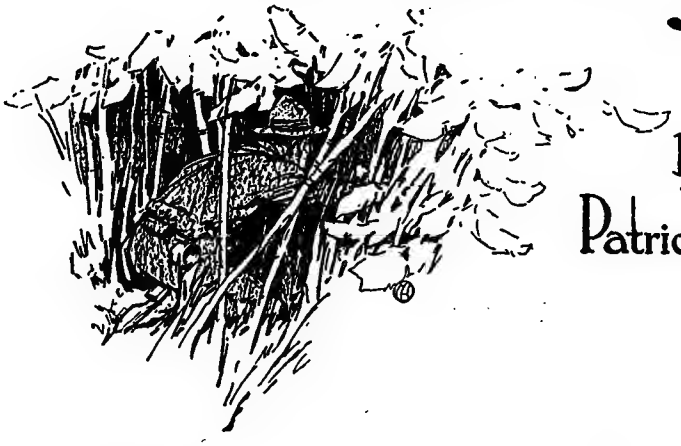
A Debt to Pay



By Patrick Casey

And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.
—"The Ballad of Reading Gaol."

THE kneeling man in soldier khaki, long Krag sling-strapped over his back, bent aside the rotting, sweat-encrusted vegetation and peeped out. The level space, bathed in gladdening sunlight, was fully half an acre in extent, and clear save for a *palma brava* and a cluster of stumpy banana trees just ripening their luscious fruit. The cogon, trampled down near the center of the theater at the edges, waved waist-high and concealed in places the rude fence of entwined bamboo and rattans which completely encircled the clearing and effectively barred out the wild pigs from slipping in and plowing up the ground for sweet grass-roots.

Directly across the clearing, at the far edge, stood a small grass hut, open on all sides. It was a mere shelter from the thick and sudden tropical rains. Before it, crouched on his hams, an Ilongote, naked as on his natal morn, with long, snow-white hair, was tending dead wood to a slow, smoking fire. He bore in the meshes of hair at the nape of the dirty brown neck a small wicker purse. In that the wandering head-hunting Ilongote carries, like the sailor with his ditty box, all his belongings.

The huge, clumsy bulk of a soldier drew noiselessly back into the lush undergrowth. The vegetation settled before him into place with sinuous movements and whispering rustles. The sweat was pouring from his big, rawboned body. It coagulated in the sooty stubble of beard on the jaw that was like the prow of a battleship. It dripped from his arms where his ill fitting uniform showed at the sleeve-ends two inches of gnarled, hairy wrist. The air was pungent and humid and suffocating with dank steam and the heavy stench of rotting vegetation and black earth that was teeming with prolific life.

"What is it, Boyd?" the First Sergeant whispered from behind.

Boyd's voice dropped down to them, a fearful sibilation in the soundless dark.

"Head-hunter."

They broke softly through the jungle. The First Sergeant led. They huddled about big Anse Boyd on the edge of the clearing and made space in the rank growths to peep out.

The Ilongote had changed his position. He was squatting on his haunches, his oily back to the runway opening, visible in the fence on the side of the clearing opposite the grass hut. Boyd, the First Sergeant and the four other soldiers had a side view of him. No flat, wide-nostriled nose was to be seen. As he blew long shrilling breaths on the smoke-voluting fire, his cheeks were puffed out to a curvature. They were blackened hideously with charcoal. Out of his gleaming animal eyes the

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long strands of white hair were bound with reed fillets. They saw that the hair, naturally a greasy black, was whitened with wood ashes.

He was not only a young man, but a young man of means and fastidious proclivities. He was ornamented with three shell and seed and bead bracelets, and an armlet of plandok hide through which dangled a snaky-edged knife, cunningly carved. His neck was encased in fold after fold of copper pieces hammered into a myriad of incongruous shapes. On his left foot was an anklet of these battered coins. It was the only use for them within the brute knowledge of his tribe. The necklace previously had been concealed from Boyd's eyes by the thick straight hair and wicker purse on the nape of the brown neck.

The squad of soldiers, familiar with the country, had heard that among the nomadic Ilongotes a condition necessary before the marriage of a young buck was that he shall have taken a human head. It was a hideous marriage dowry.

The Ilongote was alone, far below his village and in holiday attire. There was some duty, some ceremony attached to his presence here. The most probable solution was that he had traveled thus far down the Gran Cordillera Central for his marriage offering.

The head-hunter cocked his head. The breath spent from his falling cheeks. He lifted his head to one side. The men could almost see the quiver of his scenting nostrils. Near the runway opening in the bamboo fence, facing the soldiers, the tall wild grass waved.

The head-hunter was afoot and facing the space, not six feet away. His ears, keen as an animal's, had warned him. Bow and arrow were in hand as he wheeled, bow bent and arrow fixed in notch. Along the runway Private Canby, U. S. A., deserter, came within the vision of both the savage and the concealed squad of soldiers.

The head-hunter's arrow quivered harmlessly over the hurtling body of the deserter. Ere he could shoot another, he was gripped by the knees and rolled over and over toward the fire. The deserter disarmed him, as he lay, of bow and quiver. Then Canby sprang to his feet, and through the sight of his Colt's automat; watched the savage crawl afoot.

"CANBY!" breathed the First Sergeant. All six had drawn soundlessly back from the lush. They eyed one another meaningly. The light in Boyd's eyes had brightened. "Get him alive, boys," ended the First Sergeant warningly.

The pursuers watched. The little, heavily muscled and long-armed savage did not cower before the deserter. So squat and long of arm was he that he had the appearance of an ape beside the tall, khaki-clad form of the white man. He was led by all his savage instincts to expect nothing less than death. He did not cower.

He watched, with shifting eyes, the deserter break the bow and then the arrows. He eased his weight from one dirty brown leg to the stubby other. The soldier, fearing attack, bolted erect. He made as if to stick the fellow with the arrow in his hand. The bushman sprang back in evident fright. The soldier knew, thereat, that the arrow was poisoned.

From where they spied, the squad could see that the bone-barbed head of the long arrow was spirally carved and the incisions choked with matter of a dark iron-gray color. It smelled fetid with decay even at that distance. It was the poison.

The deserter replaced the automat. in the holster at his hip. Thereafter he menaced the small bushman with the poisoned tip at his back. It was serving his purpose to a desire. No shots would enlighten the pursuers of his whereabouts. (He little dreamed that even at that moment, as if fascinated, they were watching him.) No shots would arouse the long-legged *barrios* in the jungles above.

The First Sergeant lifted his head from the tangle of underbrush. He wiped with the back of his calloused hand the damp from the network of fine wrinkles over his eyes. He drew a long breath of the stifling air.

"Come, boys," he whispered laconically.

He turned aside from the runway of the bushmen. It was a narrow, rank-grown path that admitted only of Indian file and that wormed with endless turns and twistings up the mountains through the damp and silent jungle.

Boyd on hands and knees followed. The others brought up the rear. They left the runway behind. They crept on all fours through muck, crawling and viscid as slime.

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At other times they climbed on trees and creepers high above the ground over impenetrable networks of underbush. With stealthy caution they worked around the clearing to come up unaware behind the deserter and the apelike head-hunter.

They were in the fetid entrails of the jungle. It was a labyrinth, a bewildering maze of wanton, prodigal vegetation. All about them were huge, rooted trees between which lush and giant ferns and mosses and orchids struggled in morbidly gay-colored numbers for room in the black earth to live. Above, climbers and coilers, some thick as cobras, others fine and delicate as silk threads, and all knotted and twisted and hopelessly entangled with parasitical plants and fungoid growths, weaved from tree to tree a thick, close, dripping roof through which no random shaft of hot sunlight could break. Dim, dank twilight prevailed. Excepting the occasional squeak of a rhinoceros-bird and the short, sharp, ringing bark of a plandok calling its mate, all was gloomy, steaming stillness. Not the slightest breeze feathered through that bosk of disease and swift decay.

The creeping squad at last reached a second runway. It had been more used than the one they had followed up from Tuao on the muddy Rio Chico de Cagayán. Hollowed by the feet and torrenting rains of a century, it was a deeply worn path. In spots it was sunken twenty feet beneath the surface. The soldiers, still on all fours, began clambering down into it.

Boyd, the huge-limbed soldier, had reached the bottom. He was starting on hands and knees, directly behind the First Sergeant, for the clearing above when he heard a low twanging thrum and something zipped through the air immediately above him. In the thick trunk of a narra-tree, which sprang horizontally from the steep lush-stalked side of the runway, the tufted end of an arrow quivered in the hard mahogany wood just above the corded, branching roots. The bone-barbed head was buried several inches deep in the iron timber. Had he been erect, it would have shot him through and through.

He dropped at full length on his face, and with right hand before him clutching a short-barreled Colt's automat., swept with fearful apprehension the motionless growths. The men lay before and behind him, quivering like sentient orchids. There was no rustle, no movement; only humid, oppressive stillness.

Crawling cautiously in the direction from which the arrow had come, up the steep left-hand cliff of the runway, Boyd brushed aside with his veined hairy hands the screen of entangled lush. He exposed a bow so massive that no one head-hunter could have bent it. He felt around in the tangle of growths at the bottom of the arroyo. He pulled out a hidden liana that at contact with his moving knee had released the taut bow.

THE men lay sweating and unbreathing. Had the keen ears of the savage in the open theater above caught the sound of the spent bow? Had his actions warned Canby?

More carefully than ever they started on. This runway, besides being more used than the other, was infinitely better guarded. They were plagued with thorns, cunningly concealed, which penetrated their knees and the balls of their hands. The short distance up to the clearing was like creeping over a bed of coals. Their clasp-knives were in constant use, extracting the painful points. They hoped they were not poison-tipped.

The clearing was deserted. The feeble fire still spit into the stinging sunlight thin volutes of whitish smoke. The lone *palma brava* and three broad-leaved banana trees sweated up above the trampled cogon. A broken bow evidenced the recent scene the squad had witnessed. But from the tall wild grass at the runway-opening in the fence, there was no sound or sight of Canby and his savage prisoner.

The men crept slowly and noiselessly through the cogon. They came upon the fire, six feet away. The myriad marks of broad army shoes and prehensile toes proceeded across the clearing toward the grass hut. It was on and up again through the deep gully that continued with innumerable convolutions up the jungle-impregnated mountains on the other side of the open hovel. The soldiers could ill afford to waste the rest of the waning afternoon. They felt, from Canby's sudden departure, that the spent spring-bow had told him they were following.

They got afoot. The way was picketed with countless cunning, infernal traps. There were staked pits that undermined

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the trail, concealed spring-bows, and sharp poison-pointed spears so cleverly set behind the angles of the walls of foliage that at sharp turns the by-passer would receive a nasty, fatal scratch. Trees, bent tense as bows, at touch sprang erect. They were capable of hurling a man through the dripping arcade overhead and dozens of feet up into the blistering sunlight. Thorns festered in the lush undergrowth; they had no effect on the thick-soled army shoes of the men. The soldiers stalked on, giant white men, while from each hand and overhead brush and lush menaced them with deadly pitfalls.

Ahead, Canby plodded on through the rotting growths and slippery muck with the arrow held poison-head to the head-hunter's back. He made faster progress than the squad, for the bushman, his unwilling guide, led the way, like a swinging ape, a step before him. From spot to spot he leaped to dodge the hidden thorns. All the while he scrutinized the entangled latticework and forced it to yield to his animal keenness of senses the secret lurking-places of the traps. More and more, as the afternoon waned, the squad was left behind.

The wild deer barked sharply to their mates. Out in the world it was sundown. In fancy, the soldiers could hear the boom of the sunset gun far down in Tuao on the swirling, muddy Rio Chico. But it might have been midnight for all the light that held in that abysmal bosk. Tropic night swooped down. Within that dank, soundless primeval *rhuk* it was inky, viscid black.

The pursuers could not see the forms of one another. They held by the left hand on the shoulder of the man ahead. The heat was close and damp and feverish, the darkness tangible. In the blackness, despite their caution, a spring-bow was discharged. The poisoned arrow, with an ominous zip, clipped the khaki of the First Sergeant's right arm. He called a halt in a sunken space of the runway, where the lush sweated thick.

II

THEY supped on coconuts, a few bananas and some fruit resembling a small apple and tasting like a cranberry. These the soldiers had collected in the passage of the day. A running guard was set. Within an hour Boyd was to awaken the next man for a sleepless vigil and sodden cigarettes through another hour of steamy dark. The rest settled themselves for a snatch of sleep.

They had been on the pursuit all day. Ere false dawn had streaked the eastern skies with its promise of light, they had started on the trail of Canby. He had sneaked that morning from the old, rat-eaten Spanish barracks which front on the brown and weedy town plaza of Tuao. Wading through the cogon on the marshy bank of the broad Rio Chico de Cagayán, they had followed the deserter's tracks to the headwaters in the mountains where they had come upon the runway of the Ilongotes.

Alone of all that squad, Boyd knew the reason for it all. He himself had brought the letter to Canby from the post-office station, the only tin-roofed structure in Tuao. The day prior the mainland mail had come. He had noted the post-mark. It was Hillsville, Carroll County, Virginia.

He smiled over the dead cigarette pasted to his lips. He smiled into the unmoving blackness of lush and ferns and lianas. It was the nearest post-office to his home. Some one was warning Canby. It was a woman's hand. It told the reason for Boyd's leering smile the day his company had joined Canby's in the old moldy barracks down in Tuao. It gave the lie to Boyd's friendly actions. It had sent Canby hurtling headlong into the rotting network of cunningly concealed traps where lurked savagery abysmal.

Boyd realized Canby's purpose—to make through the jungle of mystery and decay, over the huge rice terraces of the Igorrotes which encircled the open serrated tops of the Cordilleras, to Bangued in the Abra Province and thence to Vigan on the coast of the China Sea.

Boyd struck a match. Down the roughened side of his khaki trousers he ran the phosphorus tip. He touched the blaze to the blackened end of the cigarette. There was a puff of sour smoke through the side of his mouth. The match went out, the cigarette dead. It was soggy with warm mist. He puffed fruitlessly.

A smell drew into his nostrils. He removed the cigarette from his lips and sniffed. He put the dead end of the tobacco tube under his nose. It was just like that. It was the smell of damp fire. He

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got it stronger. It was snailing down through the deeps of jungle on the strata of dead, dank air. It was the smell of fire, smoking and built of moldy wood.

Boyd got slowly to his loose-knit six feet. There was no need for hurry. The fire might be miles above. Of a surety it had taken the odor some time in which to drop down through the motionless air. Perhaps the fire, recently built, was but a stone's throw distant. In any case, its builder had no means of ascertaining that another had detected it.

Boyd shook the outstretched form of the First Sergeant. The man was dead with fatigue. He rolled over. Realization of where he was struck his numbed brain. He sat bolt upright.

"Canby!" said Boyd quietly. "He's a stopped. I get th' stink o' fire fr'm th' bresh. Mebbe he's right yonder. Then agin, ut might be he's miles fr'm hyeh."

Boyd led. He led through the sweating, entangled gully in a darkness that was tangible and thick and impenetrable. It was black as Abaddon. Only the pecking of a crossbill at some pine tree in the bosk broke the soundless dark. It came constantly through the heated damp like the tick of a clock.

The squad strode erect, left hand on the shoulder of each leader. The right was flexed about the automat.-butt in the holster at the hip. There was a catching of feet in the creepers, a slipping on the sweating lush, and the continuous swishing and snapping from the banks of the deep runway of arborescent ferns and tree foliage and lianas, monstrous loud in the humid quietude. Always the pitfalls menaced. At times the sharp crackle of a twig flattened the squad, in their fear of concealed bows, as if before a cyclone.

Boyd made a turn. The rending of khaki shattered the dank blackness. It was a poisoned spear projecting from the foliage at the bend of the runway. Boyd did not know that. It had not touched his flesh. The loose fit of the baggy uniform on his ungainly form had saved him. He did not know that on the spear-point he had torn the coat at the hips.

AHEAD, a broad level space of the runway, thirty feet in extent and cogon-overgrown, opened above from the entangled latticework to show in the black vault a few reeling pin-points of clear crystal. The open theater, waist-high with cogon, was mellow with gray light. The litter of wood-rot and dead grass smoked slowly and thickly. In that steaming, fetid atmosphere, it was impossible for anything to be thoroughly dry. The very air was without flutter, without draft, without motion. It pressed heavily down about the fire like a cap extinguisher over a candle flame. The smoke did not curl up. It snailed in myriad volutes from the mound of the fire and snaked along the ground through the lush.

Beside it, huddled on his side, his dirty brown knees curled up almost to his chin, lay the little, grotesquely decorated savage. A volute of whitish smoke flexed this way and that over the ornamented, greasy arm that was thrown over his beetle-browed eyes. Between the skin of the forearm and the plandok-hide armlet they caught a glimpse of a half-concealed wavy-edged knife. He did not stir. He seemed asleep. He looked like an opossum rolled into a ball and feigning death on a bough.

Canby slept, exhausted. He sat on the damp, crawling earth, on the other side of the fire and almost hidden in the waist-high cogon. The Colt's automat. glistened on his knees. Sheets of a letter were outspread in his hands, limp on the butt of the Colt's. His head was bent forward, his campaign hat far down on his forehead. Only his wits had deserted him. His consciousness of the evil jungle and still more evil prisoner was gone.

The space opened immediately at the turn of the runway. Boyd halted upstanding. Noiselessly he pressed aside the rotting sweat-encrusted undergrowth. With the men huddled on either side of him, for a breathless moment he looked.

The little head-hunter stirred. It was the faintest tensing of limbs. It came moments later. After it ensued an unbreathing silence. Only the pecking of the crossbill at the pine-tree in the *rhuk* slithered through the soundless dark.

The savage lifted from over his wild, animal eyes the dirty brown arm on which hung the kris-waved knife. From under the fillets which tied up the straight white forelocks he watched the result on the sleeping soldier. His eyes shifted in gleams like those of a jaguar peering from lush. He watched for a still eternity. Everything

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was still as solemnity. The crossbill had quieted. It was brooding, ominous.

The apelike figure shook to its feet. He pulled the wavy-edged knife from between the plandok armlet and the greasy brown skin of his forearm. Like a weird jungle devil, he flitted springily around the fire toward the unconscious deserter.

His charcoaled face was puckered. It trembled and worked like a monkey's with animal passion. But there was a pleased glint in his eyes, fillet-shielded and wild as an animal's, as he thought, no doubt, of the stilted *barrio* far above and how the tomtoms would boom and the warconches wildly bellow when he brought in, as his marriage dowry, the prized head of a white man.

The long Krag gleamed straight out through the lush from the pit of Boyd's shoulder. He would not trust the Colt's. A trice of time and unerring fingering had released the gun from its sling-straps across his back.

The Ilongote had dropped to his hams beside the sleeping soldier. He was rocking from side to side. His whole squat body, glistening a sweaty brown, was thrilling tremulously like a snake's in the passion of the moment. In the claws of his right hand was the kris-waved knife poised to sever that tilted head from its khaki shoulders.

The five other soldiers were too frightened to trust themselves to aim steadily. It would need a steady aim; the grotesque little head-hunter was swaying like a pendulum in a clock before the deserter. They were, at that, all expert riflemen, sharp shots. For that reason they had been selected for the pursuit from the different volunteer companies down in Tuao. They were under command of the First Sergeant of A Company, First Tennessee Volunteers, the deserter's Company.

Two of them were from Company C, First Tennessee Volunteers—Boyd, the huge clumsy bulk of a soldier who was aiming, and another, a medium-sized blond man. The latter knew big Anse Boyd for a remarkable shot. He had heard him drawlingly relate tales of shooting men in feuds from "th' bresh," as he called it. He had seen him unerringly pick off Filipinos at a momentary bob into view of their woolly topped heads.

He had heard Boyd spit words of hatred against this man they were hounding. He had noted Boyd's yellow-toothed grin of malice when the big fellow had learned he had been detailed with the squad of pursuers. Both these men, he knew, hailed from the same mountainous section of Virginia. He had a thought which was almost a conviction. There was a feud between the two. It was a long-standing, deadly family feud. A subtle fear crawled like a serpent into his skull and wrapped itself around his brain. He reached suddenly across and clutched the barrel of the Krag.

"Who are you aiming at, Boyd?" he asked. His voice rang low with accusation and the pupils of his eyes were drawn to mere tiny black points of suspicion.

Boyd turned slowly from staring ahead. He gazed over the still leveled rifle at the other. His black-fringed mouth twisted to snarl a retort. Ere he could speak, the Sergeant, ignorant of the deeper drama afoot, said in a tense whisper:

"Shoot the Gugu. Careful, Boyd. We want Canby alive."

Boyd, at the mention of the name, drew his upper lip tight and up over the gums of his yellow teeth. He flashed a withering look from the knowing soldier of his own Company to the four other surprised men.

"I hate him," he sibilantly gritted. "Hate—thet's why I kin shoot. Fer lemme tell ye, I don't keer ef I hit thet snake o' a Gugu, or thet skunk o' a white man."

HIS hand flashed to his battered campaign hat. He slouched it farther down over his shining eyes. Then his finger went to the hair-trigger. As he took slow aim along the gleaming barrel, a moment long as torture ensued. The men forgot to breathe. They eyed the rocking form of the head-hunter. Only the thud of their hearts against their chests seemed to break the solemn stillness.

A thin pencil of flame shot out. The Ilongote lifted himself bodily from his knees. He crumpled forward on top of the deserter. Both fell heavily back into the cogon and lay concealed from sight.

The squad looked at one another. They spoke no words, but the same thought was in the head of each. Their eyes sought Boyd suspiciously.

The huge mountaineer was possessed for the space of a thought by the notion to

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stride away from their accusing eyes into the motionless jungle. He hated them and the Service. Now that his mission was consummated, the old Canby-Boyd feud ended ... but, come to consider it, neither he nor any of the others was sure that Canby was killed or even wounded. How could they tell but that he might be shamming? He might be crawling at that precise moment through the undergrowth away from them.

"Hyeh!" he shouted, swinging around, "He's playin' possum. Y'u hain't a goin' ter let him tuk ter th' woods, be yer?"

He leaped out of the covert of the bosk. Long-legged, he made across the theater. He found Canby under the slowly icing form of the Ilongote. Canby could have thrown the little savage off. He was wide-eyed awake. But he had feared to move. He did not know who were his attackers, whether they were head-hunters or pursuers from the barracks down in Tuao. He had played opossum.

He looked up into Boyd's face leaning over him. Boyd showed his yellow teeth in a venomous grin. A pallor whiter than ever before seemed to suck the pigment from Canby's cheeks. He glimpsed the other men of the squad rushing up behind Boyd. Instantly the sickening white was sprayed with a red shade. He screwed his face into a piteous smile of recognition.

"Well, you've got me, boys," he greeted. "But you were almost too late. My friend here seems to have taken a sudden fancy to my head."

The men lifted the cold body of the Ilongote off him, the while the First Sergeant covered him with a Krag. Boyd caught sight of the letter and the Colt's automat. in the other's lap. He bent over to pick them up. Canby lifted himself, despite the Sergeant's menacing Krag, to make a grab for the letter. But Boyd, for all his uncouth appearance, was too quick for him. He eluded his clutching fingers. He flashed a yellow leer. The Sergeant whipped out a sharp command at Canby.

Boyd could read only with difficulty and decided effort. But he knew his only sister's handwriting. Of it he had been very proud when in the old days she had written letters for him. He turned the pages. He found her name, sure enough, at the bottom of the last page. He put two and two together. He knew in a trice. His sister was in love with Canby.

He gave Canby a yellow-fanged grin of malice, deep and implacable. Once again, his eyes sought the letter:

Fancy Gap, Carroll County, Virginia.
May 17, 189-.

MR. BLAIR CANBY,
Private, Co. A, 1st Tennessee Volunteers,
Tuao, Province of Cagayán, Island of Luzon,
Philippines.

DEAREST BLAIR:

No doubt you have learned long since that Anse has joined your Regiment. You know why. It is not to fight for his country, no more than my ancestors fought on the side of the Down-Easters for love of an Indivisible Union. They fought for the North because they hated the South and its riches in land and slaves. Anse is fighting now in order to be with you, in order to worry you, animal-like, until the opportune moment arrives when he will transplant the old Canby-Boyd duel to the Tropics and strike for the avenging, as he considers it, of his dead father and brothers and vaunted family honor.

I can't find it in me to blame Anse. Not only because he is my brother, but more because he is acting according to his lights. He thinks that in this he is doing right, just as on a larger scale Aguinaldo believes he is acting for the best.

But oh, I do fear for you, Blair. Why did they ever bring you into it? I know it was only a last resort. Your father was ambitious to make you a lawyer and then, through his influence, a judge through whom he could laugh at us Boyds and our vain attempts to secure justice before you.

But when the feud broke out with renewed vigor and your four brothers and all mine, excepting Anse, were killed, and your father met mine at the County Seat in Hillsville—well, you know your father's last words were to send for you at the college in Williamsburg to finish Anse, the youngest and last of the male Boyds.

Your father had little dreamt of the change in you, that in giving you an education he had built within you an insuperable hatred and contempt for feuds. Even had you not met me, on your way home through the pine woods, I doubt if you could have stomached killing Anse.

Goodness knows who started this terrible feud, or why. Certainly, Anse did not. You know he did not kill any of your brothers, although many a time he may have shot at them from the bresh. You could not bring yourself to play hide and seek with him in order to slay him. It was utterly impossible after you met me and found I was his sister, a hated Boyd. Now you know it was.

I thought I was doing you good, protecting you, when I urged you to join the Volunteers. I wanted to get you away, for I felt that you and not Anse would die, as you had no heart for the medieval task. And then Anse disappeared. I have only just learned that he joined the same Regiment as yours. How he located you in this I do not know nor can I guess. I tried to conceal it by sending you over to Tennessee.

Now he intends getting you, killing you, sometime, somehow. I lie awake praying that you may know why he is with you in the War. I have dreams of engagements wherein you are shot from behind in the back. Or of forest and swamps where you

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and he are man-hunting each other, fighting it out together and you always waiting, waiting, for him to wound you in order that you may be aroused to a just lust for his blood.

Oh, Blair dearest, is it any cause for wonder then that I am sick—sick of worry and fear and despair? Nervous prostration, the doctor calls it. He has looked for some improvement in my condition, but I have been a month in bed and am getting steadily lower. I have tried to have courage, to hope for the best, to pull myself together, but it is beyond my strength. Your letters have been farther and farther apart and I never know which is the last one.

Can't you do something, Blair, dear? You have served nearly two years. Is it not possible for you to get discharged, to buy your release, or be transferred back home here? Oh, I want to see you, to know you are alive, to have you with me once again. Blair, dearest, you must do something.

Yours,

QUENTINA.

BOYD looked up. Again he grinned at Canby. But a hard light held in his eyes. He passed both automat. and letter to the First Sergeant.

Canby was jerked to his feet. The handcuffs were snapped upon him. The Sergeant detailed Boyd as the deserter's immediate guard. It was the blind outcropping of fate. Probably the Sergeant did not realize the deeps of the men's hatred for each other. Perhaps he thought of that in particular as a safeguard against Canby's escaping. In either case, Boyd smiled maliciously once again.

Then it was down the dank, rotting runway of the head-hunters. The First Sergeant led, followed by a soldier. Then came Canby, prodded on from behind by his enemy. The others brought up the rear.

The runway was a twice-told affair to them. The darkness still closed them in with viscid overheated damp, but they pressed on cautiously and slowly.

Now, when he was not floundering in the abysmal blackness among the orchids and the lush-running growths and the huge trees and the black, slipping muck, Boyd was whispering in Canby's ear. He had saved Canby from the Ilongote. Canby must know the why-for of it. He was waiting. He was abiding his own sweet time. He was going to wait longer. Canby would be sent to prison for being such a fool as to try to run away from him and the feud. He would kill Canby on the day, years from then, when the deserter was released from prison.

Of one thing Canby could rest assured. He would never see Boyd's sister. Oh, yes, he realized from that letter that his sister was in love with Canby. It was not the first time the like had occurred between the feuding clans. But Canby would never marry her. She was a Boyd.

Boyd would wait. His sister would write letters of love and warning against him just like this one that had sent Canby scurrying into the jungle. Finally Canby would be set free. He would set his face toward Virginia. Then Boyd would get him. It was sweet. Boyd repeated the plan over and over again in the other's ear. It was as if he had put a choice morsel in his mouth and was rolling it under his tongue to get the full taste of it.

They reached the clearing with the open grass hut and found that the tent of sky visible overhead was streaked by the first shafts of dawn. They had been out on the pursuit a day and a night. Then it was on adown the runway until the stark form of the dead soldier of the squad was come upon. He had been the sixth enlisted man under command of the First Sergeant. Through and through he had been shot by a bone-barbed arrow from one of the cunningly concealed spring-bows.

Canby, as they halted by the side of the thing, drew his nether lip in between his clenched teeth.

"Oh, that it had happened to me!" he breathed wearily.

He looked up to find Boyd smiling contemplatively down at him.

The stiff form borne by two of the soldiers, the First Sergeant snapped the order to proceed toward Tuao on the muddy Rio Chico de Cagayán.

III

BOYD heard that the court martial sentenced Blair Canby to Bilibid for ten years. He smiled to himself like a gloating Fagin. It was a long time to wait. A long time ere he could finish the old Virginia feud. But the knowledge was sweet that all that time he had his man securely bottled up and thinking of him.

All that time, while Canby was brother and bedfellow to yeggmen and thieves, murderers and social parasites, unblushing rogues, canting hypocrites and outraged men; as he lockstepped in the warm mists of the mornings to the shoe-shop, the hemp-

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mills, the engine-room, or back in the hot nights to the unbearable pen of a cell; as he shuffled on liberty over the blistering stone flags of the box-like prison-yard and gazed at the four turreted walls of his tomb—every day, every minute, of that ten years dragging like eternity, the thought must be brought uppermost to Canby's mind that he, Boyd, was waiting for him outside.

Boyd feasted like a Roman conqueror the night the news broke. He stayed in town and drank *bino* down at the old Chino's *tienda* as he listened in the yellow trembling light of the coco-oil candles to the romantic tinkle of mandolins. In the glory of his gloating he did not care that for overstaying his leave he would spend the next day in the stuffy *cuartel*.

A month wore on and his trips to the Chino's store became habitual. He had never grown subordinate to discipline. He was a mountainer. He was used to moonshine, big places and the free exercise of his own brute will. His confinements in the guardhouse became oftener. They were for longer and longer periods of time.

A startling thought seeped into his liquor-soaked brain. It was during one of these imprisonments in the withering height of a stifling day. Why not attain Bilibid himself? There he could follow Canby's every move, and grin at him. His confident smirk was lost on his fellows here in Tuao. His head swam with *bino* and the malicious thought.

He sobered and came out into the steaming air. The plan still was in his mind. He was not aware of it. That is, not poignantly aware of it. It reposed in some stratum of his subconscious brain. Another moon came, like an overripe cheese, into the eastern sky and dwindled to its last horn-pointed quarter. All the while Boyd smirked through his old mode of life, the Chino meeting him at the door on off nights with a leathery-skinned face wrinkled in folds to a grimace of welcome, the lieutenant of his Company growing more and more incensed at his habitual drunkenness and seeming incorrigibility.

Then came that humid morning with its mist of steam. It was after Boyd's twenty-four-hour leave of absence. The troops were drawn up for parade on the brown town plaza opposite the moldy Spanish barracks and rickety nipa church. It was that famous Regiment of Tennessee Volunteers, each man of which was not less than six feet in height.

Off to one side in the flat, soggy rice paddies a long string of copra-gatherers in dirty white wound about the occasional guava trees from the bamboo thickets. It was early morning. There was no soft *flot* of bare feet on the grassy ways, no muffled booming of rice-mortars; only the shriek of wooden axle-boxes and the whining bellow of unwieldy carabaos as the *tuba* was hauled in from the palm groves.

Boyd was in the second squad. His huge, uncouth frame was jerking back and forth on the heels and balls of his feet. His gun for inspection was held before him at "present." It dropped and wobbled in his trembling hands. His head was skyhooting with *bino*. His whole nervous system was a wreck from the effects of the native liquor. A *lorcha* drifted with limp sails along the wide, muddy Rio Chico and wavered in the steaming heat. It jumped up and down, as in an Oriental dance of passion, in his bloodshot eyes.

"Drunk again! You blankety-blank scoundrel!"

The voice of his lieutenant dinned like the rumble of a drum in his ears. The wobbling Krag was jerked from his hands. The steaming mist thickened to an opaque mass before his eyes. The line of copra-gatherers were tiny dancing lights of white in it. The brute in Boyd was aroused. Also, that plan had come to a focus. He was angry from the top of his swimming head to the base of his spine, and from the base of his spine to the tips of his unsteady toes.

He reached out his huge hands. That white mist was about him thick as volutes of smoke. But he caught the lieutenant. He had him by the neck. The officer banged the steel barrel of the Krag against his head. Boyd went rampant. He snarled like a rat in the heat of its gnawing. He gripped tighter. The lieutenant squealed an order from the gasping orifice in his purpled face. Boyd saw the squad turn. They leveled their guns point blank at him. He shook the lieutenant. Out of sheer mad bravado, he shook the lieutemant. He shook and shook him as a cat would a mouse. The lieutenant seemed to curl up about his hands like a wet rag about a stick. He hurled the lieutenant to the ground. He grimaced drunkenly at the bristle of guns.

Not a weapon spoke. There was no one

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with due authority to give the command. There was no need of it now. The lieutenant had shot his limbs outstretched when he hit the ground, then crumpled in a heap. Boyd would be dealt with. An officer of another squad rushed up. Boyd was manhandled to the *cuartel*. He had a last view of the officer working frenziedly over the lieutenant. Clearly he saw the *lorcha* idly drifting down the river, its sails draggling limply in the heat. He was icily sober.

IV

THE lieutenant lived. That last stiffening out had been the final surge of blood through his veins. But slowly he had been brought to consciousness. Boyd had attacked with intent to kill an officer and a gentleman—a Mordecai of Virginia. The man lived, but the purpose was the same. He had attacked with intent to kill. The court martial gave Boyd Bilibid for life.

Boyd pulled his great, slouching form up in the chair. He flashed a covert yellow smile at the grizzled Colonel, acting as President, and his four judicial officers. They had played into his hands to a desire. He was given Bilibid. It mattered not that it was for life. After he got Canby, ten years hence, he could afford to allow the doctors to grow careless with him. He had heard they had that way with a "lifer." Once he killed Canby, nothing counted with him. He lived for the feud. He had no remorse for his brutal attack on the lieutenant. It was a means toward his still more brutal ends.

The journey under guard to Manila proved ages long. He could hardly wait to see Canby. In the watches of the humid nights he could see Canby's face. It danced in the flames of the camp-fire, in the mists of the jungles. Canby's face as he entered Bilibid smiled at him. The whine of the carabao as they disturbed it in its wallow beside the heavy wooden plow in crossing black paddies was like Canby's cry for mercy in his ears. He wore a continual yellow smirk these days.

THEY entered the walled city of Manila. Shortly afterward the iron gates of Bilibid swung open before them. As they entered the hot stone box of a prison-yard, Boyd leered from ear to ear. He thought he recognized Canby.

It was a zebra-suited figure sweeping the flagstone walk from which the heat was simmering straight up. He was sweeping, sweeping, sweeping, with no natural display of interest in them or the sweeping, as if he had an eternity in which to complete the task. The fellow looked up wearily as they passed. He met Boyd's yellow grin with shifting, ferret eyes. He was not Canby.

Terrible truth burst on Boyd. After a week he was dully certain that Canby was no longer in Bilibid. He had looked for him in the hemp-mills, the shoe-shop, the unbearable engine-room. He had looked everywhere for him—at the long mess-table, in the lockstep four times a day. He had not found Canby. He had stared into the pallid, wasted face of each thin-chested convict. Canby was not among them. Canby must have been sent to Alcatraz, he thought.

He set his prognathous jaw. For a whole year he strove to be a model prisoner. It was hard work. To the ignorant and tempestuous mountaineer, it was grueling hard work. He seemed unable to restrain himself from speaking his mind to his fellow men. Time and again he violated the law of the "silent system." But at last he won his good-behavior stripe. It was a year's work.

The Warden had taken a fancy to the big hulking brute of a mountaineer; he played right into Boyd's hands. He appointed him a sort of clerk in his office. Boyd had to open envelopes, stick stamps on outgoing letters and give out prison suits to the newcomers. He lived on hope. Some day he hoped to get access to the prison-book. It was to find where Canby had gone. For that he had worked all along. Then he would get transferred on his good behavior to the same prison. In the meanwhile he had escaped the hard, thankless work in the shops. His was a good billet. On torrid days he got all the ice-water he could stomach.

The position became a dull routine. Then, quite suddenly, the Warden was taken down with dengue fever and had to be sent to a hospital in Baguio, where the climate is cool and invigorating. The Assistant Warden was left in command. Two days later he staggered in from a night at Chino Roxas's gambling-hell. The huge

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mountaineer picked him up bodily. Boyd deposited him gently in the swivel chair in his private office. When Boyd left him, he was snoring like a carabao bull. He closed the door and tiptoed back to the stuffy office.

Boyd was breathing heavily from the exertion. His constitution was not what it once had been. The confinement had made his big body a huge shell.

That is usually the way with heavily muscled men used to the vast outdoors. The rigid confines, the pen-like cell, the daily breathing of humid air heavy with smoke from the mills and engine-room, had turned his strength into weakness.

He wiped the damp from his pallid face. His lungs itched as if dry with prickly dust. He wished he could cough.

He carefully locked after him the door which gave from the office into the corridor. A queer light was in his eyes. Diametrically opposite him was the sole window of the office. Through it he could glimpse the burning pen of a prison-yard and the high, turreted walls bristling with occasional sentries. The wicked noses of gatling guns poked out from the little towers on the corners. A wreath of tobacco-smoke was curling up into the dead air from the little office beside the great iron gates. Within the Warden's office a lone mosquito was thudding against the woven-root screen of the partly opened window. It was trying to get out. Save for its angry buzzing, there was not a sound in the little den. Boyd was alone.

He made over to the Warden's littered desk. He opened the heavy tome of a prison-book. He did not know what Canby's number had been. But he was quick to recognize that letter of his sister between the leaves. Attached to it was a sheaf of official papers.

The first attachment was a long slip of paper on which was written:

Company A, First Tennessee Volunteers, Tuao, Cagayán Province, Island of Luzon, Philippines. Respectfully referred to the Commanding General of the Department of Luzon, with a request for clemency in the case of Private Blair Canby, Company A. First Tennessee Volunteers, who was dishonorably discharged the Service on the findings of a duly authorized court martial, and sentenced to Bilibid prison, Manila, P. I., for ten years for desertion, in compliance with general orders. Philippines Division, dated, etc.

HIS eyes wild with terrible discovery, Boyd ran through the documents. They had been referred to the Commanding General of the Philippines Division, and finally to the President at Washington, D. C. The last document was addressed to "The Warden, Bilibid Prison, Manila, P. I." It was from the Executive Mansion.

The blood chugged like a triphammer through Boyd's veins. He shot a glance through the window toward the great iron gates of the prison. His hand half stole up to the ring pendent from the huge gong on the wall. Three strokes. Those gates thereat would swing open.

There was a discharge-paper in a drawer of the Warden's desk. It was made out to Stahr, the famous Mindanao *ladrón* chief. The Warden had signed it ere he went to Baguio so that Stahr, an enfeebled old man, might get out on the proper day. But a name did not mean anything to the guard at the gate.

One thing blocked his escape that way. The gatekeepers knew him. His position in the Warden's office had thrown him into personal contact with them. They knew his face. Also, his head was closely shaved. A prisoner awaiting discharge is allowed to let his hair grow.

The mountaineer's chest, thin as tissue, heaved and fell. No. There was no escaping it. He had entombed himself in that pen for life. For life! Forever to work without lifting his eyes or bespeaking his neighbor! He felt himself going mad. A fit of coughing seized him. It had been coming on since that dry itch in his lungs. It left him a huge, weak, empty hulk. His big shoulders sagged wearily. The cold beads of sweat splashed from his brow to the last paper, the President's endorsement. His gnarled finger ran over the concluding sentence once again. Slowly and laboriously he spelled it out, word for word:

And in view of the foregoing wherein is shown how Blair Canby was hounded from Virginia and even to the Philippines and deserted the army for the primary reason that he wanted to escape this feud, I see fit to pardon the aforesaid Blair Canby and hereby order the issuance to him of a non-conditional discharge.

BOYD slumped his huge frame down into the Warden's swivel chair. That last document was in his rigid hands. But he did not see it. He

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was doubled up with coughing. His face was convulsed and purple. The prison damp and confinement had got him. A terrible pounding was going on where his heart had throbbed.

He sank back, weak and swathed with chill sweat. That nameless pounding continued. It was weakening him. It was sapping his strength like the loss of blood. Had the violence of the spell burst an artery? Against the lids of his closed eyes something swam and took strange shape. It was Canby's face. It was Canby's face pressed against the golden hair of his sister's head. Her lips were moving. She was speaking to him.

"Good-by, Anse."

He heard it quite plainly.

"Good-by, Anse." Just like that. A soft, loving croon. And Canby's lips were moving. A benign look held in his eyes.

"Good-by, old man," he said.

Boyd felt the touch of his hand.

"Good-by," Boyd said slowly to the empty, stifling room. Something impelled him to smile. "Sis, forgive . . . happy . . ."

The Assistant Warden found big Anse Boyd, next morning, huddled in the Warden's chair, the ponderous prison-book on his knees and the shadow of an indescribable joy on his face, calm as a babe's.

Hemorrhage of the heart was the doctor's verdict of the cause of death. But, had he known, it was discovery, frightful and shocking; and death-sleep in a new-found happiness.

A Trade Maneuver in Povalia

By Daniel Louis Hanson

AT THE corner of Rue Helder and the Boulevard Madeleine is located Café Julien, the most fashionable resort in Brevopolis. There officialdom and bureaucracy gather every afternoon for an hour or two before the National Assembly meets, and there society disports itself during the evening, giving way at midnight to a Bohemianism which is rampant till early morning. He who has not sat at the tables of Café Julien, has not heard its music, has not seen its fair women, has not tasted of its wines, is still unqualified to write a definition of life; he has not lived.

It was under the striped awnings of Café Julien that William Jessup sat that June evening, his fourth in Brevopolis, with a cup of coffee and a package of cigarettes on the malachite table in front of him. On his lap lay a copy of the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*. There was news enough in it, and Brevopolis had more than its usual share. Povalia, the little pocket kingdom which lies at the end of that arm of the Adriatic that indents the coast of the Balkan Peninsula, north of Corfu, had drawn the attention of the entire world; and of course, Brevopolis is not only the capital

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and metropolis of Povalia—it *is* Povalia. So Brevopolis held the center of the world's stage that day in the columns of the press.

Would Povalia keep aloof from the Balkan imbroglio, and by so doing limit it to a tempest-in-a-teapot affair, or would she join in the struggle, and by so doing precipitate a general European war? That Povalia would eventually take the fatal step William Jessup had believed from the very first; and so he had told Moses Irons, in his Chicago office, three weeks earlier.

"I deprecate war," Moses Irons had said in reply. "I abhor it, but if it has to come, I want to get a slice of the business it creates. I have been a contributor to the Peace Fund for several years, and never have gotten a dollar in return, while others have. The stockyards will get a good bit out of the canned beef contracts; Messerschmidt, down the street, will sell clothing as he did to Greece; while Weltgood is probably already hustling salesmen after the shoe contract. I want something."

Out of that conversation had come Jessup's trip to Brevopolis. There was not much that a plumbing supply house could sell to an army in the field; nothing it seemed, in fact, till the agile-minded Jessup happened to think of the Diamond Pocket Filter.

"Good!" Moses Irons had shouted. "If you can get rid of the forty-seven thousaad fool things that Ross, the ass, loaded me up with, I'll be saying pleasant words to you on your return. Not," he continued, still remembering the principles laid down at various Peace Fund dinners, "but that they would be a splendid thing for an army, yet——"

So it transpired that William Jessup, tall and thin, with a smoothly shaven face that suggested long fasts and vigils, sat at the malachite table in Café Julien, the very Forum of Brevopolis, watching his neighbor, a newcomer, arrange three lumps of sugar on his saucer, pour a thimbleful of cognac, and then apply a lighted match. But the fusel oil did not ignite.

"Cuss it!" exclaimed the neighbor in unmistakable accents.

"I judge you are English," said Jessup, and handed over a match.

"Not on your life," replied the youth.

Then, having succeeded in his attempt: "I am a Yankee—from the very heart of it at that; from Toledo on Lake Erie. You never saw a red-headed—" he ran his fingers through a perfect torch of hair—"nor a freckled Johnny Bull did you? Thank Heaven, I have my nationality left—though that is all!"

"Will you have a cigarette?" asked Jessup, pushing the case toward him.

"Thanks—and thanks for letting me hear speech that has vowels to it; this clash of consonants is splitting my ear drums." And he began smoking with feverish haste.

In the conversation which followed, James Morgan told his life story with a frankness that attracted Jessup to him; and a friendship sprang up between them that three years' intercourse in America could not have caused.

"Better have another cup of coffee," Jessup suggested, as Morgan's revelations drew to a close.

"No more of that dope, thank you, but I wouldn't mind a little absinth; it kills a man over there, but in this climate and with these people it becomes necessary. Yes, another cigarette, if you please."

Jessup again pushed the case toward him.

"Then you are an editor, Mr. Morgan?"

"No. The Turk is the editor. I am just the official paste pot and shears of the *Vremya*. But," he burst out as the full measure of his troubles rolled over him, "that low-browed Turk couldn't run the sheet a day without me. I crib the telegrams from the English papers, translate them, redate them and get them in shape for our pirate sheet; I arrange the general reading matter and I write the editorials. Yet he calls me an 'infidel dog,' abuses me in every way; then, all of a sudden hearing some imaginary call, he gets out his little piece of carpet, and kneels with that hook nose of his pointing to the southeast, muttering gibberish. That over, he throws the carpet at me. I get twenty rubles a week for living in the circus."

"Why don't you quit then?"

"And get drafted into the blooming army! My being a newspaper man exempts me. But he is fierce. Just now he is complaining that I don't get up-to-date matter; says we ought to have articles of historical nature, giving the experiences of other nations placed as Povalia is now; wants editorials, strong editorials, pointing the way for the War Office to walk in, to be followed later, by red-hot editorials roasting the same War Office for not having taken our advice. He

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says he never has been in America so, it shows how the microbe of journalism crosses the Atlantic. I think, though, army or no army, that I'll chuck the job. Don't you want to stake me for a ticket back to the States?"

JESSUP had begun to drum the table, as was his custom when thinking deeply. There had come to him the recollection of a certain waterworks contract that an Iowa editor had helped him get. A great deal could be done with editors, or through them, as long as they did not realize what was going on. Morgan repeated his question.

"Don't you want to stake me?"

"Maybe I'll have you go back with me, Mr. Morgan. You think there is going to be a war, do you?"

"It is bound to come. The King, who is English by birth, does not want it, nor does the Minister of War, General Powell—the same Powell that marched to the relief of Gordon. But the people want it. It is in their blood. They are firebrands, and would rather die fighting than live to old age in peace. That is why the *Vremya* has such a big circulation and influence; we cater to the popular demand. We have left all the other papers at the post; why, *La Presse*, the Government organ, is being distributed gratis in many sections of the city, and even then the people will not read it."

"Forty thousand is the standing army," mused Jessup absent-mindedly.

"Twenty-five thousand actually," replied Morgan, "but the reserves bring it up to forty-five thousand within the ages of sixteen to fifty-five. You remember that all of Povalia has only three hundred thousand people, and half of them are in Brevopolis."

"Yes, I'll stake you back to the States," said Jessup, as Morgan stopped to light a fresh cigarette, "but not just yet. I think you had better stay and help out the Turk for a while. He is right. He is not hastening the war that you say is coming anyway. He is simply trying to point out the mistakes other nations have made in similar crises. You should give him the stuff he asks for and then follow it with stiff editorials; it is a duty you owe to this land."

Morgan laid his cigarette down on the malachite table, and looked at Jessup in undisguised astonishment.

"Say!" he began. Then, remembering the promised passage to the United States, he continued in a modified tone, "I am only a kid, not a cyclopedia, and there are only twenty-four hours in a Povalian day——"

"Yes, yes, I understand," interrupted Jessup. "I was going to say that, having nothing to do, I shall be glad to assist you —without pay, of course. We can have access to the library in the American Embassy, and I can get an annual to the 'Brittanica.' Of course, I shall have to stick to English, so it will be up to you to render the stuff we get out into this mongrel dialect of many consonants. Suppose we try this, for, say, six weeks—then the States for us."

Morgan picked up his cigarette and tried to revive it.

"Say, I have told you my life history this evening, but now that I come to think about it, you haven't said a thing about yourself. Are you a newspaper man?"

"I am not," replied Jessup decidedly.

"A missionary then?" persisted Morgan.

"Some might call me that," replied Jessup, his fingertips coming together in an old habit of his. "I really am here in the i terests of the Peace Fund," he concluded in a spirit of conviction.

II

TWO days later, the *Vremya* featured the first article in a series descriptive of various national crises in other lands, similar to the one which now confronted Povalia. Greece, Persia and Spain, each pointed, on successive days, a lesson on unpreparedness in the face of grave danger. At the same time the editorial page of the *Vremya* took on an authoritative tone which quickly caught, not only the public ear, but also the official one.

"The Turk is delighted," reported Morgan at the end of the second week, as he and Jessup were working over a leader for the next day. "He threatens to add two rubles a week to my stipend. Our subscription list has nearly doubled, and we can't print fast enough on those ramshackle presses to satisfy the newsgirls here in the metropolis. There is even some talk about a special paper train in the evening."

Later, as at midnight they were taking

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an airing in the Café Julien, Jessup asked, "What is all this excitement about?" nodding his head toward the nearby tables where liqueurs and cigarettes had been forgotten in the heat of discussion.

"Oh, the only topic of the hour here in Povalia," proudly replied Morgan. "This evening's editorial in the *Vremya;* that is all they talk about here in the Kingdom now. In the various cafés the guests quarrel as to who is to have the sheet first, and it is generally settled by some strong-voiced chap reading it to a whole roomful. Oh, it is great stuff we are getting out. It makes one think of Park Row after a scarehead has been issued!"

"Only worse," said Jessup, "for these people discuss their newspapers with hands, arms and feet."

The editorial page of the *Vremya* grew in intensity as the days passed. At first it had made only vague suggestions, pitched in a mild key; now it began to make definite demands upon the War Office. Povalia must be saved; the purple and red banner of the little Adriatic Kingdom must not be permitted to trail in the dust; the War Office must be prepared to act at the psychological moment!

It was journalism of the deepest yellow; a journalism, which if practised in either America or England, would have brought ridicule and opprobrium upon the heads of its publishers; yet it had running through it a scarlet vein of good sense that touched a responsive element even among the thinking class. And volatile Povalia hailed it as sublime patriotism. Crowds gathered in front of the *Vremya* office long before the publication hour and snatched the sheets from the newsgirls, tendering frequently large coins for the privilege of being the first to read what Morgan called "tabasco sauce in type."

Jessup, in the meantime, was not neglecting other opportunities to accomplish his purpose in Brevopolis. He had gained a slight foothold in the War Office, by cultivating the acquaintance of an under secretary, whom he entertained on various occasions, both at the Café Julien and other fashionable resorts of the Capital. It was not long before the impulsive Povalian felt a strong affection for the generous American who never asked questions about the War Office, and who seemed actually bored when any reference was made to the coming Balkan struggle. One day Jessup had the rare good fortune of being presented to General Powell, the Minister of War. That the brief conversation should have been confined to the subject of America evidently proved a great relief to the harassed official. He parted from Jessup with an unusually warm grasp of the hand.

AS JULY passed the war clouds in the North and East grew darker and more threatening. Could Povalia preserve her neutrality in the great continental upheaval which seemed so imminent? Jessup feared not; and by urgent communications to Chicago prevailed upon Moses Irons to forward the entire stock of Diamond Pocket Filters to Hoboken, whence they could quickly be transferred to steamer. His chief's faith in him was a source of deep inspiration to the young salesman, and he swore he would win.

"I think," said Jessup one night in early August, as he and Morgan sat in that fourth-floor room in the Hotel Imperial, the actual editorial office of the *Vremya*, "that a lesson might be drawn from the experience of our own troops in Cuba and Porto Rico during 1898. While I never placed any stock in the current rumors that the Spanish had polluted our supply of drinking-water, I do know that the water was unfit for use, and that we lost more soldiers many times over from filth diseases than from Spanish bullets."

"Say, that will be great stuff!" broke in the impetuous Morgan, who was spending his days in a condition of constant ebullition. "And to think that the *Vremya* is the only sheet in the city that does not advocate war!"

"Just a state of preparedness for it," suggested Jessup, "and that is the greatest preventive of war. My mission in behalf of the Peace Fund enables me to help you in that direction," he concluded with an actual show of sincerity.

The rising sun had already cast its first beams over the towers and minarets of Brevopolis the next morning, when the two Americans rose from their writing table. Jessup had felt during that night the full joy of authorship as his pencil had raced over the paper; and Morgan had chortled his delight all through as he had rendered the stuff into colloquial Povalian.

"I'll have to get asbestos finger stalls for

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the compositors to use in setting up this editorial," he said on leaving.

One result that night's work had: *La Presse*, the Administration organ, laid aside its policy of ignoring the *Vremya*, and came out in an elaborate defense of the War office. The circulation of the Opposition sheet shot up several thousand that same week.

THE eleventh of August, the anniversary of Povalian independence, was but three days distant. In past years this day of festivity had been one of serious responsibility to the Government, necessitating a suspension of all business and, in one instance, a declaration of martial law. This year it promised to be more serious than ever before. The Government was making most elaborate preparations to meet the crisis, and the populace was not backward in promising to rise to the situation. Jessup felt that he must bring his mission in Povalia to a close before the ominous Eleventh came to embarrass the administration. With such vexatious thoughts as company he sat in Café Julien, hiding himself in clouds of smoke from a fragrant American cigar.

Upon this seclusion Morgan broke, his face aflame with excitement:

"Say, old man, here I have the biggest of all scoops, and yet can't use it—we are all through printing and the men have gone home. Read this!"

He thrust a yellow message into Jessup's hand.

Jessup read the English rendering, which Morgan had penciled between lines:

(*Reuter Despatch*)

TRIPOLI, Aug. 8.—Thirty-five Turkish soldiers were shot here to-day by Italian troops, after a court martial, for deliberate pollution of springs in Jefara Plains.

"Is the despatch authentic?" asked Jessup, in whose heart hope was resurging.

"Good Heavens, yes. See, it is a Reuter—that means the same over here as an Associated Press despatch in the States. See what that would mean if we could use it red-hot! As it is now, the morning sheets will run it as discredited news to-morrow, and it will be dead for us by evening."

Morgan looked the picture of dejection.

Jessup rose to his full six feet two.

"Then why don't you run a 'Midnight Extra?' Get together your crew and stick up a few bulletins around the city announcing that at twelve o'clock this very night the *Vremya* will issue a special; these people never go to bed anyway. In the meantime I'll frame up an 'I told you so' editorial, and you have enough galley stuff to make a fair-sized sheet——"

But Morgan was already getting away with:

"You are simply great! You are just over and haven't had time to shrink like the rest of us. Say, if I only had a barrel of red ink from Park Row now!"

As Jessup looked out of the Hotel Imperial two hours later, he saw placards on the newspaper kiosks, announcing something about the *Vremya;* while down Rue Helder, up Boulevard Madeleine and along the other thoroughfares dodgers were being thrown right and left. When Morgan called a short time later for the promised editorial, he brought with him one of the placards; gleefully he translated it for Jessup:

THE GREATEST EVENT IN POVALIAN HISTORY
MIDNIGHT EXTRA OF THE *VREMYA*
DON'T GO TO BED TILL YOU HAVE READ IT!

Where the red ink had come from Jessup did not learn till long afterwards, but there it was, at midnight, in six-inch letters covering the first page of the *Vremya* special, which, true to the tradition of a far distant land, made its appearance an hour before scheduled time. Crowds were gathered around each kiosk, and in the cafés strong-voiced readers were shouting the news to large groups.

III

JESSUP'S friendship with the under secretary gained him an entrance to the War Office the next morning, and an opportunity of sending in a message to the Minister of War, General Powell.

"In what way can you be of service to Povalia?" demanded the grizzled soldier, for Jessup had made a strong plea for admittance.

"By showing you this," replied the Chicagoan, unwrapping a nickel-plated device, which he had taken from his pocket on entering. He thanked fortune silently that

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he could make a sales talk in English without the need of interpreters. "Would your Excellency instruct a servant to bring a pail of water? I shall take but five minutes of your time."

General Powell, after a moment's hesitation, gave the necessary order. Taking the little device, Jessup inserted the upper tube in his mouth, and stooped toward the pail, that the lower and longer tube might be placed in the water.

"Stop, sir!" sharply commanded General Powell. "That water is not fit to drink; I'll order some spring water to be brought in."

Jessup removed the tube from his mouth. "This, your Excellency, is the famous Diamond Pocket Filter, and I don't care how dirty or microbe-laden the water is."

He stooped again and drank from the tube. "Your Excellency will see now, the siphon having been started, that the water comes out of the upper tube clear as crystal; the eternal snows of the Ghegen Range can be no purer. See, your Excellency, the water in the pail, dirty and full of sediment; this which trickles from the siphon was limpid as a ray of light. If, sir," and Jessup spoke in his most impressive manner, "the Army of Italy had been equipped with these devices, it could have laughed at the efforts made to pollute the springs in Jefara Plains."

General Powell took the filter and examined it carefully. Jessup unscrewed its various parts, showing the simplicity in construction. As he did so, the American noticed on the official's desk a copy of that morning's *La Presse*, which had been forced by the *Vremya's* Midnight Special into giving the Reuter despatch a first page position; also into editorially assuring the people of Povalia that the Government had already taken steps to make impossible for its troops, if they took the field, such a condition as had occurred in Africa.

"Why is this better than a distilling apparatus?" demanded General Powell.

"Because, your Excellency, it is immediately available; the trooper can throw himself down beside the nearest rivulet or pond and assuage his thirst; and it is portable. Besides, distilled water very quickly breeds new germs."

"Where is your stock, sir? How many have you, and what is the price?"

The directness of the minister's questions put heart into Jessup.

"At Hoboken, your Excellency, adjoining the docks of the Mediterranean Steamship Company; we have forty-seven thousand, packed two hundred and fifty to the case; and the price is thirteen rubles each."

"Whew!" whistled the Minister of War.

"Thirteen rubles—ten American dollars each, your Excellency; less than a good saber costs; half as much as the price a gun brings. And cheaper a thousand times over than a man, especially when there is no big reserve to fall back upon. If we had had such a device as this at the time of our Spanish War, it would have been worth its weight in gold over and over."

General Powell used his pencil for a moment. "Ten American dollars as you say. We would not need more than forty thousand; I suppose you would let the lot go at an even four hundred thousand dollars?"

As Jessup recalled Moses Iron's offer to sell the filters at a dollar each, to save himself the sight of them with its consequent aggravation of soul, he had difficulty in restraining himself from a somersault in the official presence. He, however, made a fine pretense at figuring costs: "I think we could, your Excellency; four hundred thousand dollars at Hoboken, cash against ship's manifest."

"Afraid of Povalia's credit, eh? We carry a deposit in New York, sir. But this is all talk. We are wasting time. I am afraid you can't interest us. Leave your device here, however, and return at two this afternoon."

ON THE stroke of the appointed hour, Jessup entered the War Office. General Powell wasted no time in preliminaries.

"You will sell these forty-seven thousand filters at four hundred thousand dollars on board steamer at Hoboken, and can give immediate delivery?"

"Yes, your Excellency." Jessup kept perfect control of his features.

General Powell turned to an aide, and asked in Povalian, "Where is Count Polorius?"

"At the Strategy Board meeting, your Excellency. Shall I summon him?"

"Curse the Strategy Board!" broke out the general in good English. Then in Povalian again, "Is his Majesty in his cabinet?"

"Yes, your Excellency."

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General Powell crossed to a heavily carved door, knocked and entered. As he passed in Jessup caught a glimpse of a narrow, tired-looking face; it was the King of Povalia, whose lithographed portrait hung in every corner of Brevopolis.

The conference lasted nearly an hour. Then the Minister of War reappeared.

"If you care to make that proposition to us, four hundred thousand dollars for the forty-seven thousand filters like this sample, and are able to load on the *Cretan*, which sails on the eleventh of August, we will accept it. Very well then. Sit down at that desk and prepare a cable of instructions to your company, and I'll do likewise to our consul in New York. It will be unnecessary for me to caution you that this is a transaction of State, and that any news of it must come from the Government."

IV

JESSUP decided to follow General Powell's advice: "If you are wanting to get away, do so to-night. To-morrow is Independence Eve, and in the present unsettled condition of affairs foreigners might meet with unpleasantness."

It was five o'clock before the American could get away from the War Office, and he hurried at once to the Imperial to settle his bill. Two other tasks remained—to arrange for transportation and to find Morgan. Half an hour spent in inquiry along the quays brought to light a small steamer scheduled to leave at nine in the evening for Brindisi, where close connections would be made with the Oriental Line for Marseilles. To find Morgan proved a more difficult task.

It was eight o'clock and Jessup had about resigned himself to spending another day in the Povalian metropolis, having found a seat in the Café Julien, when Morgan made a sudden appearance. Although somewhat disheveled in clothing and with not a few signs of hard usage on his countenance, there was nevertheless no diminution in the young man's buoyancy of spirits.

"I suppose you have tried to get down Rue Helder to the *Vremya* office. Well, you ought to be there now and see what they are doing to the old shop! There isn't a thing left. Even the walls are down by this time, I suppose. Well, you see, the War Office stole a march on us. *La Presse*, and that is the Government, of course, came out with a special two hours ago, featuring a contract—an alleged one, probably—that the War Office had placed some time ago for a lot of individual filters; a paternalistic Government and all that sort of thing you know. Then *La Presse* had an editorial, artfully suggesting that the *Vremya* had known about this contract all the time, yet had been printing attacks on the Government. It was a clever piece of journalism that *La Presse* pulled off—and it worked. As I said, the crowds which came down on the *Vremya* office have not left a thing. Even the presses were smashed."

"But the police?" suggested Jessup.

"The police? Oh, the police! They will get there after a time; maybe they are starting now. But you ought to have heard the Turk! Before he fled he doubled my salary every five minutes; then managed to get away with the ruble bag before I could collect last month's wages."

"Your clothes are where, Morgan?"

"In the ruins; I used to sleep in the office."

"Then come. A steamer leaves at nine. We will catch the Marseilles boat at Brindisi in the morning."

They were well out into the archipelago when the sound of cannon was heard from the Citadel, followed by two more discharges.

"We got away just in time," said Morgan. "That means martial law. Just imagine Rue Helder and the Boulevards with the line of soldiers sweeping up and down! Say," he broke in as if the thought had just recurred to him, "I thought you were a missionary?"

Jessup's fingertips instinctively came together.

"Some might call me that, Morgan," he answered softly. "A returning missionary, possibly."

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The Departure of Mr. Cassidy

by Frederick John Jackson

"WANT your time, do you?" drawlingly inquired the foreman as he pulled out his notebook. "Le's see; five months and fourteen days I make it. At forty per, that's two hundred and eighteen dollars and sixty-five cents. I'll give you a check after supper. Your job's open for you until next week. You'll be back by then, and bring the mail with you. And you might give my love to the little blonde biscuit-shooter in the Elite," he added with a grin.

That evening saw Slivers Cassidy, with the check aflame in his pocket, hitting the trail for Caliente. He owned a flea-bitten, apologetic-looking sorrel and a worn saddle to match. To the casual observer the sorrel appeared ready to drop within the next mile, and only those who knew range horses would have sized him up as a stayer.

And a stayer he was. Long miles were reeled off that night by the shuffling, awkward gait of Cassidy's mount, and daybreak saw them with hardly a sign of fatigue. Only the dust which coated both horse and rider told of the distance traveled. Slivers made camp at a water-hole, ate a cold lunch, and then slept in the shade of a rock until the sun rose high enough to awaken him by its heat.

That evening, whooping and yelling, he galloped into Caliente's main (and only) street. He cashed his check at Dynamite Howard's thirst emporium, stood the drinks for the crowd, as frontier etiquette demands, and then went out to feed his horse.

Later, with the intention of making a night of it, he wandered into the Bonanza and finally sat into a game in the rear room. Warned by painful memories, he placed only fifty dollars in sight on the table as a starter. He boosted the fifty up to two hundred and then lost it all in a big pot. On the table came the remainder of the pay check, and Cassidy started to win the two hundred back. It soon went into a big pot and, as the dealer showed down four bullets to Cassidy's king full, he arose from the table cleaned, except for a few silver coins.

Morosely he made the rounds of the various saloons, gambling-houses and dance

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halls before going to bed in the hayloft of the stable where his horse was quartered.

HE AROSE the next morning fully determined to go back to the ranch. As he passed the post-office he bethought himself of getting the mail for the outfit. Among the others was a letter addressed in a trembling hand to Thomas Henry Cassidy. For a moment he looked at it, wondering. It was the first letter that he had received since leaving home five years before, during a fit of boyish anger at his father. Then his eyes grew moist as he recognized the postmark of the New Jersey town where he had spent his boyhood days.

It was from his mother, to whom he had not written since he left home. She had read in the newspapers about his winning the fancy shooting-contest at the cowboy carnival in La Verde and had finally traced him up.

His father was dead and she was ill, destitute, and longing for a sight of her boy.

Cassidy clenched the letter in his hand as a rush of homesickness and remorse for leaving his mother came over him. Slowly he rode back to the stable, tied his horse and crept into the hayloft. There he lay face downward, while tearless sobs shook his body.

At last, ashamed of his feelings, he pulled himself together and went out to try to sell his horse and saddle. Unsuccessful, he wandered into the back room of the deserted Bonanza, tipped a chair against the wall and sat down to think. Finally he fell asleep.

Later on in the afternoon the boosters and gamblers began dropping in and soon a game of draw was in progress. Cassidy dozed on behind the dealer's chair. No attention was paid to him, because the gamblers had sized him up as being paralyzed with liquor. When the lights were lit he was awakened by the glare and sat there silently watching the dealer from beneath lowered eyelids. At last a pot was raised and backraised until there was about fifteen hundred dollars in the center of the table. Then Cassidy saw the dealer flip a card from beneath a clip on the bottom edge of the table.

He started up and pulled his gun on the gambler.

"So that's how you skinned me, you sneaking son of a coyote!"

The dealer's answer was to reach for his gun. It was an ill advised move, for Cassidy immediately cut loose and shot him twice, in the shoulder and arm. The other gamblers had raised their hands and were very careful to keep them at the regulation height.

At the point of the gun, one of the players placed the pot money and the dealer's bankroll in a buckskin sack, which Cassidy thrust into his shirt. Still keeping the group covered, he walked to the door, changed the key from the inside to the outside, then slipped through the door and locked the gamblers within.

Once outside the front door, he threw the key away and made a bee line for the stable. Saddling hurriedly, Cassidy rode around to the general merchandise store, where he invested in a rifle, some ammunition and provisions. He also bought a canteen, something that he had always despised. The storekeeper followed him to the door.

"Well, so long, Slivers," he called. "When you comin' back?"

"Never!" answered Cassidy as he disappeared in the darkness.

The door leading from the rear room of the Bonanza was finally battered down and the gamblers spread their tale of wo throughout Caliente. Most of the men about town openly sympathized with Cassidy and brazenly hoped that he would get clear. Still, the reckless shooting could not be condoned, and the Sheriff had to earn his salary—if he could. Those who knew Cassidy predicted that he could not.

When the moon came from behind the clouds, Sheriff McCann picked up Cassidy's trail. The hoof-prints of his horse were plainly visible on the smooth sandy surface of the desert, and the posse made good time. By daybreak the sheriff judged they would come up with him.

They did.

THEIR first warning came when the Sheriff's horse stumbled and sank down, accompanied by the crack of a Winchester. In quick succession came two more reports, and the deputies' horses fell dead.

The posse immediately scrambled for shelter among the rocks. One hundred and fifty yards distant, three puffs of smoke were thinning away above the boulders surrounding "Twenty Mile" water-hole.

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A bullet struck the rock in front of Slivers Cassidy, sending a spurt of dust into his eyes. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand and pumped two shots at the group of rocks from which the posse were merrily popping away at him. Realizing that he was too much exposed for the good of his future, he wedged a slab of stone between two boulders and thrust his Winchester beneath it. Then he found that, while he could keep his pursuers covered, they had slight chance of getting him.

There they lay for two hours with only an occasional desultory shot. The posse was trying to pot Cassidy, while he was merely holding them at bay. Between the posse and the water-hole there was absolutely no cover, only the flat scintillating desert, already eddying with heat-waves.

The Sheriff grew thirsty and found that his canteen was strapped on his dead horse away out in the open—probably smashed flat when the horse fell. He asked Russell, one of his deputies, for a drink. From behind his rock Russell held the canteen at arm's length toward the Sheriff, who lay behind another stone about six feet away.

Just as McCann reached for it, a lucky shot from Cassidy struck the canteen in the center. The resistance of the water in the tightly corked canteen caused it to burst under the impact of the high-power bullet. The water disappeared in a fine spray, and a jagged strip of metal was all that remained of the canteen.

"That makes me thirstier," said the Sheriff. "Johnson, got your canteen?"

"Naw!" answered Johnson. "It's on my hoss."

"Well, we sure are up against it then," said the Sheriff. "On the edge of Pacha Valley, out of water, and the best shot in the Southwest holding the only water-hole within twenty miles! It's gonna be hotter than the pig-iron hinges of Tophet. Our only chance is to wait for darkness and then crawl for the canteen on Johnson's horse. It's a full moon to-night and we ain't got much chance of getting Cassidy unless he falls asleep. We gotta wait till dark."

And so they waited. By ten o'clock their guns blistered their hands whenever touched. By noon they were suffering untold tortures. Exhausted by their long ride and sleepless night and baked by the merciless desert sun, every tissue in their bodies craved moisture.

McCann finally wiped his parched, swollen lips with a tongue which rasped like sandpaper and croaked, rather than spoke, "Boys, the heat's getting me. I gotta have water or I'm a goner."

And he waved his handkerchief above the rock.

In a moment came a hail from Cassidy, "What yuh want?"

With his hands held high, McCann arose from behind his rock and started walking toward Cassidy. At each step he sank to his ankles in the yielding, burning sand. Blinded by the glare he reeled, stumbled and at times almost fell. Only by sheer force of will did he manage to reach the water-hole, where he collapsed.

Cassidy allowed a few drops of water to trickle between the Sheriff's lips as he bathed his face. In a moment he revived.

"Cassidy," he muttered thickly, "the heat's got me. I gotta have water or I'm buzzard-feed."

"I see the heat's got you, but water's gone up since I cornered the supply. You listen to me for a moment. I've got a sick, widowed mother back East, and she's out of money. She'll go to the poorhouse if I don't go back to her. Smith was running a brace game and got my pile. I saw he was crooked and started to get my money back. Smith pulled a gun and I just naturally and cheerfully plugged him. I knew that I was in for it, 'cause I had my gun out first, so I just took my money with considerable interest before I skipped. I came here because I knew that I could make a getaway.

"My horse is in the shade of that rock, and as soon as it gets dark I'll just vamoose. Around the first turn of that hill you'll get your first sight of me, and then it'll be too late to shoot in the dark. I could have shot all three of you easier than I shot the horses, but I figured that I could make it without any killing. You messed it up for yourself by riding plumb into my trap. I didn't figure on your running out of water. That helps a lot. You're all in now, and the other two won't be able to stick it out much longer. It's about one hundred and thirty in the shade, and they are on the wrong side of the rocks to be in the shade anyway!

"Now, my proposition is this. I am going to ride in and catch a freight East. You and your boys can walk in at night. It's cool then, and a full moon. You are

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to say that I was killed while resisting arrest. I am going to stay East, so no one will ever know the difference. You can take my rifle back as evidence. Why, man, you'll be regular heroes! On the other hand, if I wait and take your guns away with me, think of the laugh that will go up all over the Southwest at the posse that had their horses killed and guns taken away by one lone ba-ad man!

"You better tell the boys to leave their hardware behind and come over for a drink. And they better not hold out any six-guns in their boots, or there will be trouble."

"All right," answered McCann after some deliberation. "You seem to hold a reg'lar royal flush. If you go East I reckon the boys will be willing to say you were shot. But how about the money? I gotta take that back with me to make the story stick."

Cassidy's face fell.

"I plumb forgot about that," he admitted ruefully.

He handed the heavy bag to the Sheriff.

"But I've got to have a stake to get East on," he continued.

"Sure, yuh gotta have that," agreed McCann. "How much yuh need?"

"Three hundred," answered Cassidy.

McCann pulled the drawstring loose and opened the bag. A stream of glittering, clinking coins poured out. McCann counted out a little pile of gold and handed it to Cassidy.

"There's three hundred," he said. "I'll take a chance on holdin' out that much."

"No chance at all," Cassidy reassured him. "That pot was sweetened twice around and Smith opened it high. Everybody stayed. Then it was raised and everybody saw the raise. Smith backraised that again, and the shorts began droppin' out. Well, this other guy sees Smith's backraise and raises him right back. And when it comes around to Smith again, he boosts it another notch. So you see nobody could figure out how much was in the pot. And I took Smith's bankroll to boot, and the chances are that he didn't know how much was left in it. So I can hold out three hundred easy, without any one bein' wiser."

A HALF hour later Cassidy rode out of Pacha Valley toward the railroad. He made a wide circle around Caliente, which was about fifteen miles east of the railroad, and some time after midnight he reached the water tank and siding, where the freight for Caliente was sidetracked, just as a freight train was slowing down. Removing the saddle and bridle from his horse and turning him loose, he crawled into an open box car.

In a few minutes a burly impolite brakeman stuck his basket lantern into the car and profanely requested Cassidy to beat it. Cassidy held a twenty-dollar gold piece into the light of the lantern.

"Huh!" grunted the shack, "I'd get more than a dollar's worth of pleasure a kickin' you outa that car!"

"That's a twenty," said Cassidy, as he brought his gun into view. "Can't you listen to reason?"

"Sure," answered the brakie with a grin. "Any time reason makes a noise like twenty I can listen to it without strainin' myself none."

"Would twenty cause a lapse of memory?"

"For twenty dollars I'd forget that I ever saw you."

"All right," said Cassidy. "A memory like that comes in right handy, don't it?"

At Yuma he annexed a new outfit of clothes and boarded the express. Two days later the passengers in a certain Pullman on the Eastbound limited were startled by the unholy laughter of a good-looking, much tanned young man who up to that moment had shown no signs of incipient insanity. He had been engaged in reading a Kansas City newspaper when the hysterics overwhelmed him.

Perhaps there is something excruciatingly funny in reading an account of your own death, and especially so when it is embellished with details supplied by a fertile-minded liar.

The story of the hour's running fight, in which all the horses had been killed and the outlaw wounded three times, particularly tickled Cassidy's sense of humor. When he had recovered from his laughter he reread the part where, weakened by the loss of blood, he made his last stand and, refusing to surrender, was killed while attempting to draw a bead on the Sheriff. His burial, which was written up quite dramatically, almost finished him.

"Gee," he gurgled to himself, "I didn't think that McCann had it in him. He sure did spread himself. Sounds so natural that I feel half dead right now!"

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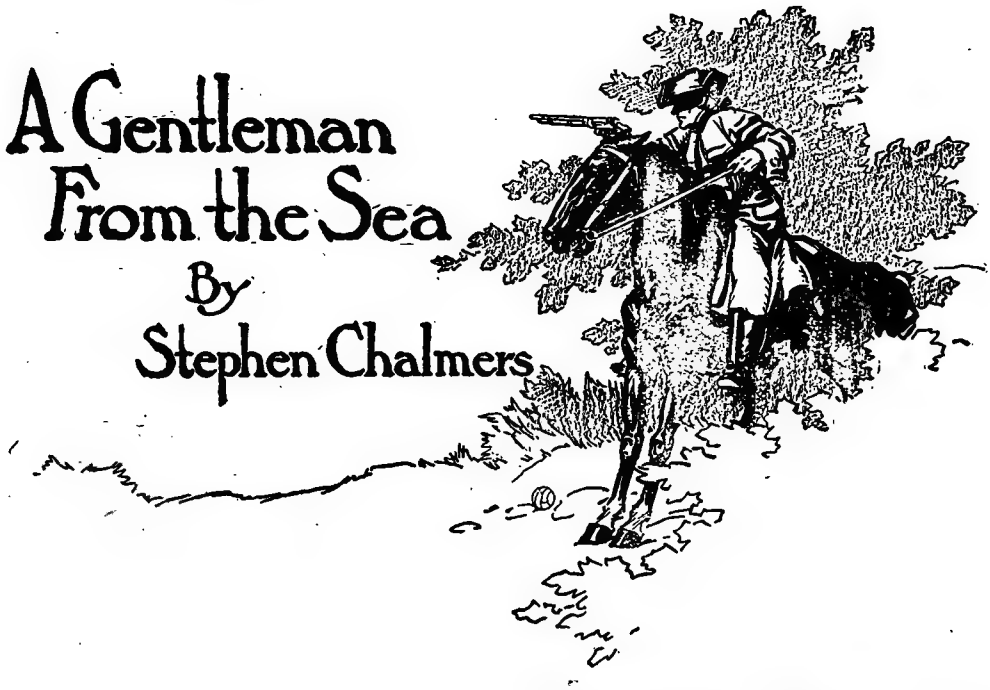
A Gentleman From the Sea

By Stephen Chalmers



CHAPTER XIV

THE STING OF THE BEE

BUT Richard's pleading finally won over his cousin's determination. Gregory agreed to remain upon the understanding that he was no longer master of Warfield Towers, that there was but one Baronet, Sir Richard, and that he himself be referred to as Squire Gregory.

Richard agreed to these conditions, although he knew well that Gregory would remain Sir Gregory to the end, so far as the underlings of the estate were concerned, and that he would still retain the deference accorded him when he was Baronet.

Yet Gregory fulfilled his own conditions in the spirit as well as the letter. He withdrew into himself very much, though with Richard he was as kindly and affectionate as before, albeit less boisterous in demonstration.

He spent a great deal of his time alone, either with books in the library or in solitary rides on horseback. Sometimes he wandered afoot in the woods, and there was ever about him an air of reserve, almost of brooding, much as he apparently tried to hide it from other eyes.

Yet the change in him was clear to all, especially to county neighbors who continued their visits to Warfield Towers. When such appeared, Gregory either withdrew altogether or observed an attitude of quiet, leaving the center of the host's field to Sir Richard.

Particularly did he observe this policy when Lady Fernleigh and Mistress Laura came to Warfield Towers. He seemed actually to shun them. Sometimes he even exhibited churlishness in the manner with which he fled their approach. Of course, he could not openly avoid them. When, as happened, he was caught before he could escape, he saluted the ladies with a calm courtesy which yet lacked his old-time joviality, and a few minutes later a glimpse would be obtained of a figure with slightly bowed shoulders disappearing within the house.

At first this behavior distressed Richard, who thought he knew the cause of it and reproached himself accordingly. Several times he remonstrated with Gregory, but the latter would merely smile and wave his hand as one who would say:

"Let be. In the end you shall see 'twas best."

At first, too, Richard refused to take advantage of his cousin's withdrawal from the

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race; but when he failed to alter Gregory's viewpoint, his own love for Mistress Laura drew him to a continuation of his own suit, although at times his conscience stirred uneasily as opportunity favored him in Gregory's absence.

THIRD GROG, in the meantime, and since the nocturnal discussion of Gregory's inwardness, saw less of Richard, or Richard saw less of him. The old man did not refer to the difference of opinion again and busied himself about the estate on Richard's and his own affairs. He proved a splendid husband of resources, and if Warfield estate had ever been an indifferent proposition to its owners it now became a highly successful business one under the shrewd old man's management.

And Third Grog, with a sudden appreciation of his own homilies, took to living at the Sign of the Three Jorums, which he had reorganized as thoroughly as he had taken possession of the Holly "fambly." What John Holly may have felt about it he was too fearful of his redoubtable uncle to say, and of course saltless, hard-worked Maria took Grog, as she took everything in life, as merely a new manifestation of fate.

Presently Richard took to riding every other day to Fernleigh Hall. Lady Fernleigh watched his comings and goings with a humorous twinkling of her eyes; but when the ladies came to Warfield Towers it was odd to note the shrewd thought that came into the elder woman's gaze as she watched the regular disappearance of Gregory.

Perhaps her thought found its way into Richard's mind, for ere long it came in upon him that, after all, Gregory might be a less formidable rival in the open field.

He was beginning to get a glimmering understanding of the whims of woman nature, was this young gentleman from the sea. And he could not fail to notice—he, who speculated on the lift of his lady's eyebrow—that Mistress Laura's interest in Gregory became the more piqued the more Richard's cousin withdrew himself from her presence.

"Why does he avoid me?" was the question Richard sometimes saw upon her fair face, when she moved her gaze from the vanishing figure with the bowed shoulders to pay polite attention to something the young Baronet was saying.

But gradually she, like Richard, became used to conditions and ceased to marvel at them, although Mistress Laura's curiosity was ever whetted for a chance to seize upon Gregory and wrest his secret. But as time went on she gave less divided attention to Richard, whereat Lady Fernleigh smiled and bent more attentively to her embroidery.

Richard's hope grew as did his love. Laura could not fail to read the greatness of half fearful worship in his young, patrician face; and though the rock takes years to show its wear, every drop of water leaves its impression. She gradually felt the beat of Richard's heart-waves on her senses.

THEN there came a night in the full of the July moon when he sat alone with her, not in the old rose gardens of Warfield, but in the fretted shadows of the yews of Fernleigh. Nothing happened—nothing tangible, save that he quietly took her hand, which lay like a lily in the silver light, and held it long and in silence. She did not withdraw it, seeming unconscious of where it was confined, but sat in the magic stillness which suddenly enveloped them.

By and by she happened to turn to him and found his gaze intently upon her. For several moments their eyes struck together with that rare mutual comprehension which seems to lift two persons into some vague, spiritual sphere. Her little hand trembled slightly.

Then she arose, as did he. Still with fingers interlaced they returned to the house. He bade her good night without an uttered word. He but touched her hand with his lips and took his departure with never the faintest thought of the courtesy due Lady Fernleigh. The wise old dame, learning that he had gone thus, merely smiled and said she must have been asleep!

As Richard went home, swinging along afoot with a sailor's wide gait, he wondered why he had not spoken then. But 'twould have been sacrilege, he told himself. 'Twas enough! 'Twas more than enough! And his bubbling heart found vent in a silly song of the old capstan days:

Her cheeks were red, her eyes were brown,
Mark well what I do say;
Her cheeks were red, her eyes were brown,
Her hair like glowworms hanging down,
And I'll go no more a roving
With you, fair maid.

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Then he laughed at the moon, for her eyes were black and, if she loved him, he would rove no more, save with her.

If it had not been for the melancholy aloofness of Gregory, Richard could have been happy in these days, as happy as Holly Molly, who went about her employ at the Towers singing all the day long. It was only when Gregory was within the range of her vision that her crooning ceased; but it ceased like the song in the throat of the thrush that sometimes chokes in sheer love of life.

ONE day Richard, after another hope-inspiring hour with Mistress Laura, came upon Holly Molly. She was singing softly as she polished the top of an ancient table. Sir Richard, bubbling over with love for all the world, came up behind her and planted a kiss upon the handsome girl's cheek, at the same time crying with all the cheery abandon of Master Seabird—

"What ho, cousin Molly!"

She started away, blushing, amazed, pleased, yet terrified, for this was the master, Sir Richard Warfield.

"What, lass!" he laughed. "Have ye so soon forgotten your lover of the orchard and the milk pail?"

"Nay, Sir Richard," said she, perceiving his spirit, "but they called him Master Seabird."

"Now I will buss you again," he cried.

"Nay, Sir Richard, and what would Mistress Laura say?"

"What, indeed!" said Richard, in sudden alarm. "Ah, Molly!"

He looked at her and sighed heavily, whereat she laughed in a sympathetic way.

"Ah, Sir Richard, now ye are no more Master Seabird, forget what I said that day. Ye will even make a pretty pair and—and——"

"Aye, Molly, lass?" he pleaded, for 'twas honey that fell from her lips.

"And I hope ye will even win her."

"But Molly," he whispered, quite as her equal, "think ye not truly 'tis my cousin Gregory she loves?"

Molly's face suddenly became colorless. She bent feverishly to her employ. He urged her to answer.

"Sir Gregory will never wed her," she said, without looking up. "That is——"

"Yes, Molly?"

"If some one I know be bold enough to win her from him."

"Bold!" cried Richard. "I would slap the King if she bade me do it. But 'tis not lack of boldness, Molly. 'Tis the chance to speak free with her I lack. I fear, lass, that being so grand hedges people around with overmuch attention."

Molly rubbed and scrubbed at the table, along the edge of which Richard had idly flung a leg. Suddenly she looked up with knowing eyes.

"Know ye the Black Pool, Sir Richard?"

"Aye. Marry, I ought to. 'Tis a fine place for a swim."

"And the little bridge that crosses the stream below, on the Fernleigh path?"

"I crossed it an hour ago!" he declared.

" 'Tis a favorite spot of Mistress Laura about dusk," said Molly quietly, and next moment she slipped away.

"Oho!" breathed Richard, his eyes widening with delight.

Then he looked at the door beyond which Molly had vanished and shook his head.

"Poor lass!" he muttered. "I see."

HE WOULD have gone to the bridge the very next day, but that early in the afternoon Lady Fernleigh and Mistress Laura came to Warfield Towers. As luck would have it on this day, Gregory was caught with Richard. Before the former could make his usual retreat, Mistress Laura, perhaps in curiosity, perhaps relenting of her late favors to Richard, seized the recluse boldly and said:

"Now, Richard, you shall sit with my mother. I wish Gregory to myself. He hath played truant and must even render me an accounting. Come, Gregory. Your arm, if it please you!"

And straightway she carried off Gregory to the rose garden, leaving Lady Fernleigh shaking with amusement and even Richard laughing at his own defeat. But Richard did not grudge Gregory his opportunity. Indeed, he hoped that the incident might clear the atmosphere a little.

In the meantime, Gregory, in the rose garden with Laura, was vehemently denying that he had stayed away from the ladies intentionally. When Laura pressed him, however, he fell silent and at last said a word or two that sounded like—

" 'Twere better so."

Woman's curiosity drew Laura on to play

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with that most dangerous of love's fires, a man's mysterious melancholy. But all he would do was to talk of Richard. No matter how adroitly she twisted the conversation, Gregory persistently harped on Richard, till at last she lost patience and cried:

"Come, Gregory! Surely ye have some virtues of your own. Indeed, I grow tired of Richard. 'Tis Richard *this* and Richard *that!* Plague take Richard!"

"And why should it not be?" asked Gregory. " 'Tis his right. Some are born to the praise of others. Some are born beloved of the gods—and women."

"And is he so beloved?"

Gregory laughed. He was growing more like himself.

"Is he? Surely ye do not know our Richard, Laura. His is a heart so brimming with good things that for every pretty face he can spare a little of the overflow."

"Ah!" said Laura. "Yet he is but a boy and he loves as a lad does."

"He is surely a grown man in stature," said Gregory, "and but a year behind me. Would that I were such a boy!"

"Did he love Chiquita?" asked Laura, quite abruptly after a silence.

"Chiquita? I never heard the name," said Gregory. "But no doubt 'twas one of his lights o' love upon the Spanish Main."

He suddenly burst out in the old mirthful, kindly luagh.

"Oh, Dickon, Dickon!" he cried, wagging his head. "Indeed, one must forgive him much for his very heedlessness of life's gravity. The first time I ever saw him——"

He laughed softly, deeply, like one who quakes inwardly at the memory of a jest.

"Tell me."

"So ye may tease him with it?" he inquired, teasing her.

"Gregory, you must tell me. You see—sometimes I do not understand. He seems one moment a man; then again he is but a happy lad——"

"And pray, venerable grandame, how many snows are on your own head?"

"Eighteen," said she, simply. "But tell me ——"

" 'Twas at the inn," said Gregory in dramatic tones, like one who plays mock tragedy. "I came upo' them suddenly, as 'twere. Her slender hands were imprisoned in his, and soul was in her eyes, youth's fire in his."

"Who? Who was it—she?" pleaded Laura, her eyes sparkling and her face smiling, though her under lip had crept inward a little.

"Holly Molly, the innkeeper's daughter!" hissed Gregory.

Then, the little mock drama played to a finish, he threw back his head and laughed so merrily that Lady Fernleigh and Richard heard and marveled.

"Holly Molly?" said Laura, to whom the name was strange, even had it not been an inversion.

"Aye, she who is now chambermaid in the Towers," said Gregory; "grandniece to the old pirate. Ah, the rogue!"

"The rogue?" echoed Laura with slightly knitted brows. "The pirate or—Richard?"

"The love pirate!" chuckled Gregory. "Indeed, Molly wears a wistful eye these days, as if she loved too well for sleep. Would that I could love so, Laura—to love without the ache of loving. To love like the bee that sips a Summer flower, tires of its sweet and passes gaily to another blossom. 'Twere a happy humor."

Laura was silent. Suddenly she seemed to dismiss the subject of her reverie. She straightened up and lifted her chin.

"And what, pray, have I to do with the love affairs of this innkeeper's daughter?" she asked coldly.

At the rebuke Gregory glanced at her, then again became his reserved, melancholy self. Presently he led her to her mother and, after a moment, excused himself.

As he disappeared with his hands clasped behind him and his shoulders bent in the now familiar attitude, Richard noted that Laura's gaze wonderingly, almost wistfully, followed him. Something had occurred between Gregory and Laura, Richard felt sure.

NEXT afternoon Richard went to the bridge. Gregory saw him leave the Towers and marked the direction the young buccaneer took. A cloud settled upon his face. A few minutes later Gregory emerged from the Towers and went in the direction of Fernleigh. But he did not travel by the path Richard had taken, seeming to prefer a solitary course through the woods.

Holly Molly, from whose eyes Gregory was seldom far, had not seen Richard start for the bridge, but from the window of an upper chamber her jealous gaze had followed

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Gregory into the wood. Her face was drawn with heart-pain and her under lip quivered. Was it to meet Mistress Laura where she walked at evening that he went?

"I must see. I must know!" she whispered tensely.

Presently a light came into her eyes. Perhaps it was not to meet Mistress Laura. Perhaps he would not meet her. Perhaps if she, herself, went in that direction, she would encounter Gregory away from the Towers and—he might be kind to her again.

So it happened that while Gregory followed Richard toward the bridge below the Black Pool, Molly followed Gregory to the same spot.

She may have outsped both of the cousins in her eagerness. When the young buccaneer came to a halt upon the bridge, there was no one in sight. But presently, as he waited, scanning the Fernleigh path ahead, he heard a step behind him and a voice whispered, half pleadingly, "Gregory!"

Richard turned on his heel with a strange sinking at his heart. He half expected to find that it was Mistress Laura Fernleigh who had whispered Gregory's name so softly. But it was Holly Molly. She had emerged from a strip of willows that fringed the stream by the bridge and she seemed terribly startled when she found that the man she had addressed was Sir Richard.

"Oh!" she gasped, burying her face in terror and shame that she had betrayed her secret. "I—I thought—I thought you were some one else."

"And yet 'twas you directed me here," said Richard, wonderingly.

"Yes, but—after yesterday, I—I thought you would—give up. And—and *he* used to come here, for this way she ever walked at even. I—I only came to—to——Oh, what am I saying?" she broke off, despairingly.

"You came to see him, little Molly?" said Richard softly.

He looked at her with great compassion and laid a sympathetic hand upon her shoulder, for all at once he realized the tragedy of this poor girl.

"Come, lass," said he, seating himself upon the rustic rail of the bridge and drawing her close to his knees. "We will even talk this over, you and I. Master Seabird was Molly's friend once. Tell him about it. What has Master Gosling been doing?"

She caught his spirit and seemed to derive comfort from his sympathy, but she had no intention of confessing her heart.

"Tell me but one thing if ye will," said Richard earnestly. "Have ye been foolish in your love, Molly?"

"No," she replied, lowering her head.

"Are ye sure of that?" asked Richard, suspecting a woman's denial.

"No."

"Meaning that ye were foolish or y'are sure ye were not?" said Richard, laughing.

At this kindly inquisition poor Molly gave way. Her shoulders heaved and all at once she burst out in the most terrible sobbing—the kind that a true man can not listen to and remain unmoved.

"Poor little lass," said Richard.

He slipped his left arm about her and stroked her brown head caressingly.

And neither of them were conscious of the picture they presented to other eyes. They were particularly unaware of the presence of the other woman, who had approached the further end of the bridge, coming along the Fernleigh path.

Laura stood transfixed for a moment; then she shuddered slightly and silently went back along the dusky path.

"The sting of the bee," she said within herself. "Ah, Richard!"

CHAPTER XV

IN THE DUSK OF THINGS

AS MISTRESS LAURA returned along the path to Fernleigh Hall, the slow English dusk deepened and fell with a melancholy beauty upon her spirit. It was the reaction of light.

She walked slowly, almost unconscious of her movements or destination. Just what was passing in her heart and mind it would be difficult to express, even if one knew.

She was aware that she had suffered some sort of shock in the discovery of Richard's supposed piracy in love. Why she should suffer as she did? She asked her own reason with a kind of appealing wonder. Until this minute, she now thought, she had loved Gregory, although she had never definitely thought so before this minute. Until this minute she thought she had—loved?—Richard; but in this minute she was certain that she never had and, furthermore, that she despised the young buccaneer with almost a hatred of contemning.

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Yes, there had been a strong feeling for Richard—always; perhaps the fascination of the romance of him. At least, she had liked him, or had been inclined to like him; just how much she had never realized until now that she so cordially disliked him. And, in direct reaction, her mind and heart leaned kindly toward Sir Gregory.

The suggestion made by Gregory as to the buccaneer's bee-like propensities had not affected her. Gregory had not meant her to take it seriously, and she had not done so. If she had, the failing in Richard had but added to his manly fascination, as a dash of salt improves the flavor of a too fresh egg. As a woman she had been attracted, as all good women strangely are, by a little suggestion of human imperfection. It seems to please a woman to think that that heart which has played with the fires of love many times has at last burned itself at her own pure altar.

Her musing was disturbed by a footstep upon dry leaves a little ahead of her. She looked up and saw, coming toward her down the path, the figure of a man with bowed head and hands clasped behind him. It was Gregory Warfield. She was surprised to find him there, coming as he did from the direction of the Hall.

He apparently did not see her until he was within a few paces. Then he looked up and, recognizing her, gave a great start. Time had slipped into the first week of August; a clear, crescent moon cast a pale light athwart the dusk. The faint glow showed a tense expression upon Gregory's face.

"Have you been to the Hall?" she asked.

"No," he said, strangely. His tone, his manner, suggested that to him the meeting was unfortunate, a thing that he would have avoided if possible.

"I did not pass you coming down," she said, a little nervously. "Ye must have——"

"I came through the woods," he said. "I prefer the quiet. I but struck the path when it grew dusk."

"Ah," she said.

Then the oddest silence fell like a pall upon them. Laura could not understand it, save that her silence grew from his. His personality had ever been a strong one.

The silence was too marked. He seemed to realize this and, lifting his face, looked directly into hers. He seemed to find it difficult to form even an offhanded sentence. Suddenly he gave up subterfuge.

"LAURA," he burst out, "it is of no avail. I have tried to avoid ye, even at the risk of being churlish and incurring your displeasure."

"But why? Why?" she asked, coming nearer to him, full of sympathy and curiosity. "Why should you avoid me?"

"I love ye, Laura," he said stonily.

"Oh," she gasped.

Then she smiled and uttered a little laugh.

"And pray, Sir Gregory, do you commit a crime in that? I say 'tis honor ye do me."

"Ah, you are kind," said Gregory, "but still ye do not know my meaning. I love you and my love is greater than my strength. Like a lovesick swain I ha' wandered in the woods o' nights, only that I might see the light in your chamber window. Am I not a fool?" he added, with a bitterness that made her marvel.

"Gregory!" she protested. "This speech does not become ye! Is this how a courtier of merrie Charles comes a wooing? Shame on ye, Gregory Warfield!"

And she gave a little forced laugh.

"Are women grown such tyrants?" she added.

"Still ye do not understand," he said, standing erect with his hands clasped resolutely behind him. "Times and affairs ha' changed for me and for the prospect of my love. Sir Richard is master of Warfield Towers, and I am plain Gregory.

"Not that I begrudge the lad what is his," he added quickly. " 'Twere a pleasure to serve Dickon, for I love him. But I am penniless and, save for his generous heart, homeless. How then could I, loving you truly and honorably and with no ambition greater than your comfort and happiness, tell you of my passion? Besides——"

"Yes, Gregory?" she said softly, as he paused. "Besides——"

"Do ye not know that Richard loves ye, Laura? And do ye not love him?"

"I?" she cried, drawing back a step. Her eyes flashed in scornful memory.

"I do not love Sir Richard Warfield!" she said sharply.

"Ye do not—love him?" he echoed slowly.

The light of the crescent moon fell upon his face, which was suddenly moving with hope and joy. His hands suddenly fell from his back to his sides. He took a quick step forward and slowly his arms reached out to her.

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"Then—Laura!—is it possible?" he almost cried. "Is there in your heart but a seed of affection which I might tend to my own happiness? I love you—love you! Do you love me, Laura? If ye but promise me that some day you might—even at the end of eternal time—I would wait and be never importunate. Laura!"

All at once Laura discovered that, in sympathizing with him, in arguing, as it were, against his injustice to himself, she had herself walked into a trap. But the trap was pleasant and her heart was sore, and——

Had he not wooed her ere ever this buccaneer came between them in their perfect friendship? She had played with him when they were both children; aye, played they were lovers, too! Love must have come to them both, and for each other, some day. His own magnanimous withdrawal for Richard's sake had been without her consent. It had even taught her to know herself and him better.

"Laura!" he said huskily.

He had taken her hands and was holding them gently, too respectful of her to advance further, too deeply in love to retreat.

"My heart is in your hands. You are all life to me, but 'tis for you to speak for yourself. Think well—and answer."

She looked at his quiet face, his living eyes and his smooth, broad brow. This was Gregory Warfield, and he loved her. Her eyes fell before his steady gaze.

"Ah, yes," he whispered. "You love me, Laura? Will you not say it? Whisper it? Look it?"

"I—I—" said Laura, "do not know. I believe there is none in the world I—honor more; but until to-day—until this moment——"

She lifted her eyes and, collecting herself, returned his gaze.

"Gregory," she said, "let us speak no more to-night. I would think a while. Come to me again——"

"To-morrow?" he whispered, eagerly.

"Yea—nay. The day after the morrow," said Laura.

"I am satisfied," he said. He bent courteously and kissed her fingertips. He would have led her back to Fernleigh, but she said him nay.

"I would be to myself for this moment, until——"

He watched her as she slowly moved up the path, the faint light of the crescent moon flickering upon her as she passed under the interstices of the overhanging branches. She did not turn once.

When she was out of sight Gregory lifted his face to the skies and smiled in great content. Then he turned his face toward Warfield.

There was no one on the bridge when he crossed it, but his rapid footsteps overtook Molly and Richard as they, too, returned to Warfield. In his honest concern for Molly's unhappiness, Richard had all but forgotten his own hope in going to the bridge. Anyway, Mistress Laura had not come there, and it was perhaps as well, he thought.

Gregory slowed his gait, not wishing to overtake and pass the two. He knew that Mistress Laura had encountered them. Had he not seen the tableau on the bridge with his own eyes he would have known, from Laura's very manner, that she had.

"Poor Richard," murmured Gregory to himself. "'Twas unfortunate."

WITHIN sight of the Towers Richard came to a halt. He patted Molly's shoulder and bade her go on, while he lingered so that she might have time to reach the Towers ahead of him.

Gregory came down the path slowly. He whistled softly and tactfully pretended not to see his cousin until he was almost upon the other. Then he said:

"Ah, Richard! Poaching on your own preserves, or only moon-gazing?"

"Neither," said Richard. "I ha' but left Holly Molly. Gregory," he added gravely, "y'ave made sad havoc of that poor lass's heart."

"Seems y'are patching it," said Gregory, chuckling. "What one man can do with a woman, another can always undo. Persevere, lad!"

His tone jarred upon Richard just then.

"Molly is a good lass," he asserted.

"What would ye ha' me do?" inquired Gregory, who saw that frankness was required. "Wed her?"

"No-o," said Richard, who saw his cousin's position.

They walked in silence together to the Towers. As they ascended the flight of stone stairs, Richard said again, as if upon the same thought:

"No. I suppose 'tis the way of the world."

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"Aye, the way of the world," said Gregory, with a touch of regret in his voice. "Dickon," he added, "I'm sorry—sorry."

"Ye have a good heart, Gregory," said Richard. "But—if a woman loved me like that, I might even wed her despite. 'Twas but chance made me Sir Richard."

"And I, plain Gregory!" laughed his cousin.

THEY entered the library. Almost instantly a man jumped up from the library table. He was a little old man in a green coat and with a tuft of upstanding hair upon the fore part of a very bald head.

"Too*loo*ralay!" said he, raising himself jauntily upon his toes. "Sir Richard and Sir Gregory! By my sacred sheepskin! And as like and loving as the split halves of the same pea. Odds bodkins and buttons!"

It was Master Squibbs of the King's Bar. He had come on business all the way from London Town.

"'S fish and tripe!" said he. "In the first place, which of ye is the Baronet? And his Gracious Majesty bids me discover if Mistress Laura Fernleigh be Lady Richard or Lady Gregory!

"For myself, and by command of his Gracious Majesty, I bring the sum of ten thousand pounds in gold, half of which I am to deliver to one Grog's Boy, and half to one Third Rum, the said shares being prize moneys due the persons so named, or misnamed.

"And by the rood and halidome!" he concluded, clapping a hand to his breast and producing a letter. "These to Sir Richard Warfield."

Richard took the letter and glanced at the superscription. The difficulty of reading his own name reminded him of his disadvantage. With a little frown he handed it back to Master Squibbs.

"Read it, pray," said he.

Squibbs broke the seal and unfolded the missive. It was dated from London Town on the first day of August in the year 1673.

SIR RYCHARD WARFIELD:—I dele freely to inquier after ye, alsoe that ye may knowe I am free of the proceedings brought upon mee and without staine upon my honour. The King, whoe hath knowledge of my integritie and publike service, hath entitle mee Knyght and sendes mee fourth to Xaymaca, Lieftenant-Gouvernour thereoffe, and alsoe Commander of His Majestie's Souldiers on the Islande.

If ye have your fill of gentil life and woud hie to the Indes, come ye to Londón Town before All Hallowes and bee my owne goode man in the King's employe, for hee doth bid mee hang all evill-doers att Port Royal, the whych boucaniers.

HARRY MORGAN, Knyght.

At the last sentence Sir Richard Warfield burst out in a roar of laughter.

"*Sir* Harry Morgan, by Heaven!" he cried. "Governor of Jamaica! And he must even hang his own buccaneers!"

Gregory did not laugh. He was regarding his cousin with thoughtful eyes.

"Well?" said he. "Will ye go?"

"Why, as to that," said Richard, "'twill much depend on——"

He glanced at Gregory and grinned.

"Dickon," said Gregory, and his tone was regretful, "I think ye should even go."

"And why?"

Gregory looked uncomfortable and walked to the window with his hands behind his back, his fingers twining and untwining nervously. Richard, suspecting some secret matter, followed him and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"What is it, Gregory? Why should I go?"

Gregory's agitation became greater, but he turned and gazed steadily at Richard.

"I know ye are a good fighter, and I think ye said ye could be a good loser?"

"Aye," said Richard, although his heart sank like lead. "Speak up. Do not keep me in suspense."

"I WIN!" said Gregory, adding after a tense pause, "We spoke together but an hour ago on the Fernleigh path."

Richard's jaws came together hard and tight. He looked at his cousin with strained, pained eyes. But he mastered the great inward tempest and held out his hand.

He spoke no word, but Gregory felt the strong, warm pressure of Richard's handclasp. About a minute later they returned to Master Squibbs, who was ostensibly examining the portrait of the former Sir Richard Warfield.

"Master Squibbs," said the young buccaneer, "ye are come in good time, for there will be lawyer's work and by to-morrow night there will be but one master of Warfield Towers.

"I go with Harry Morgan, back to the ships and the sea where I belong, after—" he looked at Gregory and lowered his voice

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—"after I have taken my quietus at Fernleigh. 'Tis the only honor I may pay her."

CHAPTER XVI

THE EQUALITY OF WOMANHOOD

IT WAS natural that Laura, upon her return to the Hall, should at once confide in her mother without reservation. The dame was clearly distressed, yet she found some interest in the situation besides concern for her daughter's peace of heart and mind.

"She loves Richard and would prove it by marrying Gregory," was Lady Fernleigh's extraordinary conclusion. "Heigh-o! What left-handed creatures we women are."

But her words to Laura partook only of sympathy and consolation, and she bade her sleep upon the whole matter and be assured that it would settle itself.

Next morning Lady Fernleigh took up her embroidery and a position on the porch, whence she could waylay any visitor to the Hall. And as she worked and watched, she pondered. She could plainly see that things were not just as circumstances made them appear. She fully realized the shock to Laura's sensibilities in the incident of the bridge, and perceived the sudden weight Gregory's discourse on the buccaneering bee had taken. She wondered if Gregory had foreseen it.

Then she placed in the scales the effects of a melancholy lover, a romantic path under a crescent moon, and all just at the moment when Laura's reason was in revolt against her heart. Lady Fernleigh felt a little disappointed in Richard; yet as she thought of the innkeeper's daughter and the scene on the bridge, her mouth twitched humorously. She had the thorough knowledge of men which is ever the heritage of mature women, and she had discovered long ago that in respect of their polygamous instincts it pays best to forgive much. Yet she was disappointed in Gregory, too, in a resentful sort of way. What business had he to make his proposal at that critical moment? Pest on his good fortune!

By and by she saw Richard swinging up the path toward Fernleigh. She studied him as he came nearer. There was no shame in his bearing. His face was grave, but his shoulders were peculiarly square and his chin just a little aggressively lifted.

"If that lad be not honest," reflected Lady Fernleigh, "then I have been blind since maidenhood."

The hand which Sir Richard kissed closed over his own and she drew him to the seat beside her.

"Richard," said she, without preamble, "have you ever been honest with women?"

"I never deceived a woman in my life!" said he, surprised.

She eyed him steadily and with just a little humorous reproach. He saw her meaning and reddened.

"Never a woman who could be deceived," he added confusedly.

Lady Fernleigh chuckled.

"Then you will surely not deceive me," said she. "Now tell me the truth about Holly Molly, or Molly Holly."

"Holly Molly!" he gasped.

"Your happiness depends on it," said Lady Fernleigh, snapping a thread.

Then he knew that he was not alone in the possession of poor Molly's secret. Yet how did it touch upon his own affairs?

"What happened on the bridge?" Lady Fernleigh pursued, without giving him a chance to think.

"Why—on the bridge!" he gasped. "I—was but comforting a lass who is unhappy. She is a good lass, poor Molly."

"Comforting her against what?"

Richard looked away over the fields, which were glorious in the early Autumn sunshine. Then he turned to the lady.

"That is Molly's secret, I fear, Lady Fernleigh," he said earnestly, "and I do not know that I may speak of it. But—if happen you think it concerns me—— Nay! If Molly has been deceived—and I do not know that she has been—'twas surely not by me. I wish I could make her happy."

"I believe it, Richard," said Lady Fernleigh promptly. His eyes had never wavered—and she knew men. After taking several stitches with a blue silk thread, she spoke again.

"If ye would speak with Laura, she is at the spinet; although—" she glanced at Richard—"I have not heard her play."

RICHARD took the hint and entered the house. He climbed the flight of polished stairs and entered the room where he had once lain for several happy weeks. It was no longer a bedchamber, having been but temporarily

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converted to it. It was the work and play room of the great house.

Laura was seated by the windows and her still figure was bathed in the sunshine from the windows. She arose hastily at his appearance and bowed gravely. Richard saw that he was unwelcome, but he had hoped for nothing.

"Mistress Laura," he said, "I have come to say good-by—I think."

He smiled with the last two words.

"The condition of my remaining is vast but simple enough. Laura, I love you. If you would condescend to become Lady Richard Warfield, I would devote my life to repaying the great honor you did me. Will you take me for a husband, Laura, and forgive the presumption of my suit?"

"Sir Richard," she replied steadily, but her face was very cold and pale, "I thank you, but I could never wed you. I do not love you."

He was staggered, for he had at least expected kindness. Her tones carried neither warmth nor sympathy.

"Forgive me," he said, simply. "I am but a rough fellow, not versed in the gentleness of language at such a moment. I had hoped that if ye could overlook the faults of my upbringing, I might yet, under the influence of a gentlewoman, become worthy of her and of my father and our family tradition."

"Worthy! Tradition!" she echoed in dismay. "Sir Richard, I can not listen. This is painful to me. Please go."

"Indeed I will," said he sadly. "I go to-night to London Town, and by All Hallows I will again be upon the sea. Mistress Laura may I say farewell, and will you try to forget my foolish ambition? It is more than a buccaneer's deserts to have breathed the same air with you for a little while."

He stood up before her with his plumed hat in his right hand, awaiting some sign from her. She looked at him, and slowly her eyes softened. After all, it was not so much his fault. He was barely twenty, and seventeen years of his life had been spent among pirates.

She came forward, extended her hand and said gently—

"Good-by, Richard."

"Good-by, Mistress Laura," said he. "Ye have been very kind to me."

He kissed her hand and walked from the room as erect as when he had entered it. He descended the polished stairs and went out into the open sunshine.

"Richard!" said the voice of Lady Fernleigh, as he paused to collect himself.

He turned to her, hurt in a nameless way by the kindness in her voice. She held toward him a little missive.

"Give this to the Holly lass upon your return to the Towers. Will ye remember?"

"Aye, dear lady. And good-by," he added, extending his hand to take hers. Instead, she took his.

"Tut, tut," she chirruped. "'Tis not good-by. Trust my feeling on that, Dickon. Come here."

She drew him down to her and kissed his cheek.

"Now off with you!" she said whimsically, turning her back upon him and resuming her embroidery at a great rate.

The kiss started the salt tears in his eyes. He could not have spoken a word, and perhaps she had divined this. He swung away down the path, which stretched as a blurred gray line before his eyes. He could have stood anything but that maternal tenderness of Lady Fernleigh.

Arrived at the Towers he first sought out Squibbs. The little man was at the library table busy with a great number of papers.

"I RESIGN everything in favor of my cousin, Sir Gregory Warfield," said Richard, shortly. "So make it, Master Squibbs. I leave for London Town to-night and will not return to England from the Indies, whither I sail with Morgan."

"Too*loo*ralay!" said Squibbs, lifting his eyebrows and looking more like a cockatoo than ever.

Then Richard went off in search of Molly. He gave her the note. The girl, in a great fluster, wiped her hands before taking it. She turned it uneasily between her fingers and looked appealingly at Richard.

"Molly," said he, "I go away to-night and most likely your granduncle will go with me."

"Oh, Sir Richard!" she cried. "Ye must not go! 'Twill break my heart!"

He understood.

"But mine is broken, too," said he, with a smile. "Ah, Molly, I was even right. 'Tis Sir Gregory she loves."

"Sir Richard! Sir Richard!" she gasped, seizing his hands in her agony of spirit.

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"Do not go away! If ye do he will wed her and——"

"Read your note, Molly," said he, fearing a scene which would avail neither of them.

"I—can not read," said Molly, tearfully.

"Neither can I!" said Grog's Boy savagely. "Take it to Gregory."

Then he went away in search of Third Grog who, Richard knew, would no sooner hear of his proposed departure than he himself would weigh anchor.

Molly, glad of any little excuse to stand for a moment in Gregory's presence, glad in her servile love to show her reliance upon him, sought out her master and begged that he read and acquaint her with the contents of the note.

Gregory, whom she found in his own room, took the missive. As he glanced over the contents an expression of surprise crossed his face. He read the message again and his eyes narrowed.

"Who gave ye this, Molly?" he asked. She told him. Again his eyes narrowed and he looked through the window in the direction of Fernleigh Hall. Presently he laughed lightly and said:

"The message is, '*Lady Fernleigh would speak with Molly Holly if she can come to Fernleigh Hall this day.*' That is all, lass," and he handed the paper back.

"Shall I go?" she asked tremulously, her eyes like a dog's upon its master.

"Certes!" said he pleasantly.

She lingered a moment, hoping for a look, some word, some recognition of her other than as a servant. But Gregory seemed oblivious of her continued presence. He pored over some papers that lay on the table. But when she went out he straightened up sharply. Presently he went to the window and stared blankly through it, his fingers twining and untwining behind him and his brows knitted close together.

IT WAS early afternoon before Holly Molly was ready to visit Fernleigh Hall. She was dressed in her Sunday frock and presented the glowing, burnished appearance of the cleanly middle class in full parade. She was a sweet, buxom English country lass, every inch of her.

A servant with an upward tilted nose received Molly with undisguised resentment, and stiffly conducted her up the staircase of Fernleigh Hall to the work and play room. Molly's heart beat hard and quick. What did that grand dame, Lady Fernleigh, wish of her?

Lady Fernleigh sat by the window. Mistress Laura was not present. The elderly woman came to meet the country lass and, to Molly's amazement, kissed her on both cheeks. Her ladyship had pondered much on this meeting. She drew Molly to a seat beside her and began to question her softly.

In less than five minutes, Molly was on her knees with her head and arms in Lady Fernleigh's lap, and she was pouring forth her heart, her love, her sorrow, her tears without restraint. What she had denied to Richard she confessed to this motherly dame, and her ladyship was crying over the story.

"I know! I know!" Molly sobbed. "Sir Richard told me as 'tis Mistress Laura Sir Gregory would wed. But I shall be shamed, and my father and my mother and——"

The door opened and Mistress Laura appeared in the room. She stopped short at sight of Holly Molly, and again she shuddered slightly. She recognized the woman of the bridge, the innkeeper's daughter. What did such a woman in her mother's arms?

And Molly, looking up, recognized Mistress Laura, and the class instinct in her made her cower and her heart sink. At any other time she might have remembered at least her equality of womanhood, but now she was caught in abject misery and in the confession of her unworthiness. Her face was stained with tears that could not immediately be wiped away or replaced by the mask of feminine pride and secretiveness.

Under Laura's cold gaze the country girl went down. Without getting off her knees she crawled over the brief space that separated the two young women and attempted to clutch Laura's hands. The daughter of Fernleigh recoiled from the touch. Inherited self-control revolted against this exhibition of unrestraint.

"Don't take him from me!" wailed Molly. "Oh, say ye will not!"

"What does this woman here?" asked Laura of her mother.

"Ye love him, I know," Molly went on, "and he loves you; but I loved him afore you and he is mine if you'll let him be. Say ye will not take him from me. I'm but a poor lass, but——"

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"What is this matter?" asked Mistress Laura coldly, but moved in spite of herself. "If I had never held him in contempt before, I should hate him now for what he hath brought ye to, poor woman. But—I do not wish to speak of such matters—with you."

Lady Fernleigh smiled and went silently to a little writing-table, where she fell to scribbling with a goosequill.

"THEN ye will not take him from me?" persisted Molly, seizing one of Laura's hands as she would have turned away. "Ye will not take Sir Gregory away?"

"Sir—*Gregory!*" echoed Laura, startled out of all remembrance of caste or station and staring down into the agonized face of the girl.

"Aye," said Molly, frightened by the expression of the lady's eyes.

"Is—Sir Gregory—your lover?"

"Aye, even that. I love him, Mistress Laura, and if you'll but let him be, he may even love me again as he did."

There fell a strained silence, through which came the nerve-racking squeak of a goosequill. Laura was seemingly waging some inward battle with herself.

"As to that," said a voice that she hardly recognized as her own, "if it concerns ye, as it may, I would never take Sir Gregory Warfield from any one."

Slowly Laura Fernleigh disengaged her hand from Holly Molly's clutch. Again the slight shudder passed over her body. Heedless of the incoherent words of gratitude that poured from Molly's very soul, she walked to the window and looked toward Warfield Towers.

A happy light superseded the gray shadow that the truth had at first brought to her face, and her lips moved.

"Gregory—not Richard," she whispered inaudibly. "Ah, Richard! Richard!"

Lady Fernleigh looked up with a quiet smile from the little writing table. She sealed the paper upon which she had been scribbling and beckoned Holly Molly with a glance.

"These to Sir Richard Warfield—and haste!" she said in a low voice.

Then she took Molly by the arm and led her swiftly out of the room, leaving Mistress Laura alone by the window looking toward Warfield Towers.

CHAPTER XVII

GREGORY BREAKS OUT HIS COLORS

A NEW light was in Holly Molly's eyes as she left Fernleigh Hall. Although she was no nearer her heart's desire and could never hope that Gregory Warfield would marry her, yet she had the consolation of knowing that no other woman would wed him, at least at this time—poor consolation, perhaps, but sufficient to lighten Molly's mind for the moment.

A surprise awaited her at the bridge below the Black Pool—a pleasant surprise, for Gregory smiled a welcome as he saw her come down the path from Fernleigh. Molly's heart beat high, for this was the kindly Gregory she had known in the happy days. He held out his hand and, as she came close, slipped an arm around her and smiled down into her eyes.

"Ah, Molly, lass," said he, "Fortune smiles upon me. Seemed I should never again find ye away from the Towers, where I must even be to ye as to others."

He drew her closer. Instantly the girl was filled with happiness.

"Ah, Gregory!" she whispered.

"And where have ye been?" he asked. "Ah, indeed, I remember now. And what would Lady Fernleigh with ye? What have we here?"

The last question was anent the paper which Molly in her pleasurable embarrassment was twisting between her fingers. He attempted gently to disengage the missive. She made but a feeble protest.

"'Tis for Sir Richard," she said, but he laughed and took the paper from her fingers, at the same time drawing away from her and coolly breaking the seal.

"'Twere easy sealed again," said Gregory. "Besides—" with a laugh—"I must even consider the affairs of that rogue, Dickon."

With that he read the message which Lady Fernleigh had bidden Molly deliver in haste to Sir Richard Warfield. Instantly a frowning cloud came upon Gregory's face. He crushed the paper in his hand and turned upon Molly a pair of eyes that stabbed to her very soul.

"And so ye told!" he hissed in her face.

He seized her roughly by her right forearm, burying his fingertips into her flesh.

"Now tell me everything! What was

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said? What did you say? What does Lady Fernleigh know—and Mistress Laura—of you and me?"

"Nothing!" protested Molly, overcome with fear and a sense of guilt.

"I see!" cried Gregory, his fury rising as he perceived all the truth. "So ye think I would wed ye, wench, if Mistress Laura cast me off? *Ye fool!*"

The words stung the girl to the quick of her womanhood. Her eyes hardened and a spot of red appeared on each cheek.

"Aye," she said, glaring into his face, "'tis well seen ye would never wed *me*, but—" she burst out laughing—"Holly Molly will see to't ye never wed another woman till first she knows what I would tell her."

He let go her arm and turned his back on her, fuming in sheer exasperation. And so this fool of a girl had upset everything! And Richard Warfield would have gone by the coach that night but for this message from Lady Fernleigh.

BUT there was a chance yet. He could see to it that the letter was not delivered. It might easily be forgotten until after he had gone and this girl would do as he, Gregory Warfield, commanded. He had but to smile at her——

But would concealing the letter be of ultimate benefit to him? London Town was not so far away and All Hallows was yet seven weeks off. Lady Fernleigh or Mistress Laura might communicate with Richard in London Town, might even in the interval return to court and meet him again. The King would hear of Gregory's victory and send his compliments to Mistress Laura. As things now stood, Laura would denounce him and Richard would take renewed hope. No. The chances were too great.

But Gregory would not yield victory to defeat at the eleventh hour. There must be some other way to right matters. But the only way, if there was any way to recover the lost ground, lay in the death of either himself or Richard Warfield. In his mind Gregory cursed that wooden-legged, prying old buccaneer who, he felt sure, had seen the inwardness of all his maneuvers toward Richard's death by "accident."

As he stood there pondering, Gregory thought of the first trick he had played. He frowned at the memory of Grog's revelation of the existence of a real highwayman and his own blundering confession in the confusion of a moment.

Then his face brightened. Was it such a blunder after all? There *was* a real highwayman. Now every one, particularly Third Grog, knew that. The highwayman and the night coach! Aye, there was a chance. A risk? Perhaps; but if he could bribe Captain Death to it and he himself keep clear of all suspicion, then Third Grog might snarl and hint and growl. What matter, as long as Richard Warfield had gone upon a long journey from which it would be impossible for him to return to dispute Gregory's earthly rights!

All at once Gregory was conscious of a hand on his left sleeve. It was Molly, and her flash of spirit had died before the menacing mood of her master. She was in tears, and again ready to let him trample her under foot.

With a curse he attempted to pluck the arm from her, but she seized it and clung to it, abjectly pleading for forgiveness.

"Let go, fool!" he rasped. "Let go!"

"Gregory! Gregory!" she wailed.

He started across the bridge. Time was flying. He had much to do. But the woman held on and her body trailed a few steps after him. Infuriated by her dogged persistence he suddenly flung her backward, at the same time plucking his arm savagely from her clutch. Her hold broke. She fell upon her back with the lace of his cuff torn off and gripped in her hand.

GREGORY dashed over the bridge and plunged into the Bracken Wood to the right. From behind him came a woman's voice, choked with horror and despair, crying his name. He dashed on through the undergrowth until he struck a faintly defined path running by the edge of the stream, where it flowed toward the highroad.

He followed this faint path—a trout fisher's path—for some distance, his pace slowing as he went and his mind regaining balance.

Presently he stopped and scanned the brush to his left. He struck off into the thickest of it. In a minute or two he came upon what seemed a perfect tangle of vines surrounding the base of a steep face of rock mantled by wild ivy and brambles. It was the abrupt termination of a ridge.

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Gregory carefully parted the tangle, pausing once or twice to study the ground. Satisfied, he pushed on. Suddenly the tangle ended in a dim, shady bower which had been cunningly devised into a single horse stall. In this natural hiding-place a black horse ate out of a crude manger. The animal lifted its head with an alert start, but did not whinny.

Gregory stroked its sleek nose and passed on toward the base of the face of rock, where again the tangle closed up. Over the tops of the growth a keen eye might have seen that the face of rock shelved inward behind the tangle. Beyond was the fulfilment of the shelving's promise. It was not a cave, but rather a hollow in the rock, sufficient to shelter a man from rain, wind and night dew.

Gregory stopped short. A man with a mask over the upper part of his face was crouched by a mere vestige of a wood fire. In his right hand, leveled over the hollow of his left arm, was a pistol which covered the intruder's heart.

"Ho, Death!" said Gregory genially. "I salute ye!"

The man lowered the pistol with a growl and slipped the mask, revealing a lantern-jawed, fierce-eyed countenance. He had thick black eyebrows that arched and joined sinisterly over his glowing orbs. His head was a tangle of black curls that fell about his neck. He was attired in long boots, breeches and a leathern shirt.

"So 'tis you?" said Captain Death.

"Aye, me. A snug cover ye have here."

"What d'ye want?" inquired the robber sullenly.

"A little service, Death. There'll be a man in the coach to-night ye might kill—he perhaps being unwilling to yield his purse promptly enough."

"Hold ye there, Warfield!" said the highwayman. "'Tis enough to risk hanging for one's own profit, but I'll ha' none o' this."

"Happen there will be ten thousand pounds in gold in the coach," Gregory suggested, remembering the buccaneers' gold.

"Ye lie, Sir Gregory Warfield," said the highwayman. "Do yer own ill work. I served ye once. Had there been a slip 'twould ha' been around my neck."

"If I raised my voice but once," said Gregory smiling, "ye would dangle like a kite on a tree."

The highwayman laughed mockingly, but his hand crept nearer his pistol butt.

"And what if I said ye were partner to a highwayman, Warfield, receiving tribute for the lay of the road and a keeping yer hands off?"

"Who would believe you?" said Gregory lightly. "A thief's word against that of the King's friend and favorite—Sir Gregory Warfield, master of Warfield Towers"!

The highwayman scowled.

"Well?" said he, sullenly. "What does his Highness please that his dog should do?"

For five minutes the men conversed, quietly at first, but presently their voices were raised in hot argument. Finally the robber dashed his right fist into his left palm and refused to have anything to do with the matter proposed, which was the holding up of the coach that night and the "accidental" killing of Sir Richard Warfield.

At the same instant Gregory coolly reached forward and plucked the pistol from the highwayman's belt. Pointing it full in the robber's face, he said softly—

"And ye will not consider it?"

"A black plague on yer soul!" snarled the highwayman.

They resumed the discussion, Gregory still holding the pistol in a handy position.

HALF an hour later Sir Gregory Warfield emerged from the bushes that hid the hollow rock. His face was very pallid. He paused for a moment by the stream to wipe a cold dew from his forehead. Then he made a bee line for the Towers, going through the woods, walking softly with the pistol cocked and his eyes keenly scanning the branches and the ground ahead.

A little after sunset he entered the library at the Towers with a pistol at his belt and a dead cock partridge in his right hand. Squibbs looked up from the mass of documents before him and chuckled at sight of the game.

"Too*loo*ralay!" said he. "Sportively inclined, Sir Gregory? I heard ye fire twice."

"I missed the first time," said Gregory, throwing the partridge upon the table and slipping the pistol into a drawer in the table.

At about the same time, Holly Molly, having wept herself to dry silence, arose to her feet unsteadily. She slowly walked to the Warfield end of the bridge, slipped into

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the willows and went up the side of the stream to the rising whence Richard and Lord Gaunt had plunged into the Black Pool. There she sat like some statue of the woman of sorrow until the dusk thickened and the crescent moon was reflected in the still water below.

CHAPTER XVIII

"A ROVING WE WILL GO!"

"THE papers are ready, Sir Gregory," said Master Squibbs, rising from the table. "They but await your signature and Richard Warfield's."

"Where is he?" asked Gregory.

Richard answered for himself. He and Third Grog were at that moment coming up the drive under the oaks after an afternoon spent at the Sign of the Three Jorums. The two buccaneers seemed to be happy and at peace with the world and one another, for they came arm in arm toward the Towers, and together their voices lifted in the old sea song that had cheered Harry Satan on the gibbet at Port Royal.

Here we be, pore sailor men,
Newlie come from the se-e-e-eas.
We spends our lives in miseree,
While others lives at e-e-e-ease!

Gregory's eyes twinkled and they were still twinkling when Richard and Grog came into the library. The young buccaneer had apparently been celebrating in slight measure his release from the cares of baronetcy. Third Grog, too, had violated his own temperance rule out of sheer sympathy.

"Y'are strangely merry," said Gregory.

"Aye, marry!" cried Richard, laughing. "What would ye ha' me, Gregory? This is no burial of the dead, but a right merry resurrection to life. For mark ye, Cousin Gregory, I ha' been thinking, and I know I could never ha' endured this milk-and-water existence. As for you, you'll grow fat and red-faced and snore in church o' Sundays. But then ye'll miss nothing o' life, for ye ha' never tasted it! Ha!"

Gregory shook his head.

"I think ye do yourself injustice, Dickon. Consider! There is no reason why ye should make this sacrifice for me. Once again, I beg that ye remain——"

"Avast, ye lubber!" cried Richard, his manner being as if he had hypnotized his thought and speech into downright buccaneerism. "I will hear no more on't. I go to sea where I belong, and right glad on't, too!" And he burst into song:

"Here's to the buccaneer, brave and bold!
Death to the Diego, no dearth to his hold!
So drink, one and all—
Amain! For Whitehall!
When I out with my steel he must out with his gold!"

The fact of the matter is that Richard's mood was simply that of a lad in his twentieth year who believes his life come to ruin. In spite of his external cheer, his heart found it hard to give up all the dream of the last month or two. But without Laura Fernleigh all the rest was as gold to a thirsty man in the desert.

And now he was trying to convince himself that he had never had any right to dream such a dream. He was a buccaneer, and buccaneers were, after all, nothing but slit-gills and pirates, and he was worse than the worst of them! It was the folly of bitterness.

"I agrees with ye for once," said Third Grog to Gregory. "If Warfield was mine, I'd see ye in glory afore I gave up a blade o' grass!"

"Silence atween decks!" roared Grog's Boy, with jocular severity.

Gregory put his head back and laughed.

"Lad, I admire your spirit," said he, "and although I may not be as joyful at this parting, I will do my best to put a smile on the face of matters.

"Therefore," he went on, "while we attend to this business of Master Squibbs, what say we ha' the kitchen prepare a farewell feast?"

"Good!" shouted Dickon. "Heave-o and lively!"

AND so, while Sir Richard Warfield signed away his birthright to his cousin, Sir Gregory, the servants prepared a special supper which when it was served about seven o'clock in the evening, was replete with English country luxury, to say nothing of wines and a single, fat, roasted partridge which Gregory insisted should be Richard's special bite.

"I shot it with my own hand but three hours ago," said Gregory.

"Though 'tis young I will make haste to eat it," said Richard; "for now that all's settled ye can not be suspected of poisoning me. And pray," he added, laughingly,

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"when ye shot the bird did ye even shoot the lace from your wrist?"

Gregory slowly looked down at his sleeves. The lace, usually at his left wrist, was gone. He had not the slightest idea when or where or how he had lost it, unless——

"'Tis odd," said he. "At any other time I should have noticed it, but my mind has been roving away and away, abroad with you, Dickon."

"Nay, no regrets!" cried Richard. "This is a wedding feast."

He filled his goblet with wine and toasted long life to Sir Gregory, master of Warfield Towers.

"And here's to my buccaneer, brave and bold!" cried Gregory.

"Now, what were that toast of the highwayman?" cried Third Grog. "Give it us, Sir Gregory. 'Twere a main good one."

Gregory glanced quickly at the old pirate. Then, with a short laugh, he splashed some wine into his goblet, arose to his feet and recited:

"Pull to the purses and dare to the deed;
Heart to the rider and stay to the steed;
Rot to the rope and a blight on the tree;
And here's to the hangman who never hangs me!"

"Bravo!" shouted Third Grog and Sir Richard.

"Too*loo*ralay!" chuckled Master Squibbs, who had entered into the spirit of the occasion in his own quiet way.

When the four men arose from the table it was nine o'clock, and but an hour remained before the mail coach stopped at Warfield Village on its eastward night run.

Gregory was congratulating himself upon the fact that Richard was a little reckless from wine, as were the others. It made his position and his posing the easier. He, himself, had drunk sparingly while pretending to set a pace. Yet how the minutes crawled for Sir Gregory Warfield!

"Odds liver and tripe!" cried Squibbs, his cockatoo tuft glowing white against his wizened, flushed face. "What is to be done with the King's gold?"

"Buy a wig, good friend!" said Dickon. "Ye need it."

But Third Grog could not be so easily separated from his money. He was for taking every penny of it along, like so much luggage. So the gold was produced and the little sacks were loaded into two meal bags.

At twenty minutes before ten, the quartet issued from the house and struck the drive leading to the road and the inn. Old Grog staggered along under his sack of gold, as did Richard, while Gregory walked at the latter's side, quietly conversing. Master Squibbs came last, a little unsteady in his gait, but with a celestial smile upon his face and in his hand his satchel of papers.

There was no ceremony attached to the going. Richard's mood precluded it and Gregory was glad to escape anything of the sort. The two buccaneers went away as they had come, without formality.

ARRIVED at the Sign of the Three Jorums, Richard pitched his bag containing five thousand pounds at Maria Holly's feet. He had enough on his shoulders without a load of filthy lucre.

"There!" quoth he. "Give that to Molly with my love. Happen it may bring cheer to her."

At the chink of gold and the weight of the sack, Landlord Holly's eyes gleamed, but Maria glared stonily at Richard and said—

"'Tis news to me that gold will patch a broken heart or mend a woman's honor!"

Landlord Holly and Third Grog stared at Maria, but Richard, who thought he understood, which he did not, shook his head and said:

"Faith and that's true, too."

Nevertheless he abandoned the sack of gold and went off to the tap room to reënforce his belief in his own piratical unworthiness. In the meantime, Third Grog was demanding to know where Molly was.

Maria glared stonily at him as she had done at Richard, and said bitterly:

"What does it matter to thee where she is? Sorry am I the day she or any of us ever clapped eyes on your leathery old face, or of that sweet villain in the tap room."

Grog stared. His jaw dropped at such insubordination in the silent, saltless Maria.

"Tut, tut!" protested the landlord, who was feeling well disposed toward Richard on account of the gold—a fabulous fortune in those days. "Hold your tongue, woman!"

"Y'are a fool, John Holly!" the woman spat at her husband like an infuriated tigress.

"Burn my lights!" shouted Third Grog. "Is it come to this? Then thank the Lord the seas is wide! I been nursin' wipers in

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the bosom o' my fambly! I be main glad to find it out afore 'twas too late.

"And as for Molly, the wench!" Grog added, indignation drowning for the moment his affection for the girl. "If so be as she won't come to buss her grandfather oncet removed, then she can go hang herself! *That's* what!"

"Which I'm thinking she's done this night!" gulped the woman; and all at once she burst into tears. At that, Third Grog beat a retreat toward the tap room.

PRESENTLY from a distance came the cheery tootling of a horn, accompanied by the jingle of harness and the rattle of heavy hoofs and wheels. The mail coach stopped before the Sign of the Three Jorums.

Richard had abandoned his gold, but Third Grog, who needed both hands to assist his one leg in climbing the ladder to the top of the coach, handed his temporarily to the guard with many and varied threats as to what would happen to his belt, boots and other personal attachments if so much as one penny were missing when it was returned to his own hands.

"A fine haul for a highwayman," cried Gregory, "if he but knew."

"The highwayman!" Grog snorted, halfway up the ladder, or "gangway" as he preferred to call it. "By Harry, I forgot that swab. But I'll roost on the cross trees here and pick him off like a Diego if he crosses our bows. Alow, there!" he cried to the guard, "heave up that sack here!"

Master Squibbs had taken a seat inside.

"Good-by, Gregory," said Richard, turning to his cousin. "May ye live long and be happy. Aye, Gregory, I mean it. To the last, I bear ye no ill will. The best man won!"

"I doubt it. I doubt it, Dickon, lad," said Gregory, with remarkable evidence of deep feeling. "But good luck be with ye wherever ye sail, and may the wind blow ye back again to Merrie England. I shall be master of Warfield Towers only in your absence."

The two cousins shook hands in silence. Then Richard hastily climbed the ladder and took his seat on the top of the coach with Third Grog, who was already demanding of the driver why he did not at once weigh anchor and make sail.

"Heave and chantey, mate!" cried Richard, to drown his feelings. He gave the old buccaneer a hearty slap on the back.

And just as the coach started and the horn cheerily tootled, Grog's Boy lifted his voice in the old capstan song:

"In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid,
Mark well what I do say!
In Amsterdam there dwelt a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade,
And I'll go no more a roving
With you, fair maid!"

The clattering and rumbling, jingling and horn tootling died away down the road toward the next stop, Fernleigh Village. Still to the ears of Landlord Holly and Maria and the few idlers before the inn came faintly the chorus of the buccaneers:

"A roving, a roving,
Since roving's been my ru-u-in,
I'll go no more a ro-o-ving
With you, fair maid!"

When the sounds could no longer be heard and the idlers had returned to the tap room, Landlord Holly lifted his eyes to the crescent moon in thankfulness for Third Grog's departure. As he did so, his eyes caught sight of that new sign which had marked his defeat as master in his own inn.

"Maria," said he solemnly, "we'll ha' yon eyesore down afore bed. This be the Apple and Flagon once more!"

But Maria, in the doorway, covered her face with her apron and burst into another fit of crying.

"Molly! Where's Molly?" she cried. "Oh, I knows as something's a happened this night!"

CHAPTER XIX

DEATH

TEN minutes after the coach started from the Sign of the Three Jorums, the highwayman, wearing a sinister black mask and mounted upon his splendid black horse, slipped out of the covert and reined sharply to the right.

Instead of making for the high road and the point between Warfield and Fernleigh where he usually held up the coach, he forced his animal as fast as was safe up the little trout fisher's path to the rustic bridge below the Black Pool. Here he again reined sharply to the right. Next minute the highwayman and his gloomy steed were traveling fast along the path to Fernleigh

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Hall, between which and the highway stretched the Bracken Wood.

The pace increased to a gallop. Sparks flew from the hoofs of the black horse. The masked highwayman leaned forward in the saddle, urging the animal to greater speed.

Fernleigh Hall, all dark save for a single lighted window high up, appeared to the left, ahead. The lighted window was open and by it sat a woman who listened with regret to the dying strains of the coach horn.

The highwayman darted past the fork where a path led to the Hall. His course lay directly east and still parallel with the highroad.

About a mile farther on he came upon another fork. The path to the right led to Fernleigh Village, the one to the left, which inclined more straightly ahead, led on to nowhere in particular, but in the direction that suited the highwayman's purpose.

His game was to hold up the coach, but he had started late. He must first get ahead of it before he took up a position on the highroad. There were probably ten thousand pounds in that coach, and there was another little matter to which he had to attend. Before starting, he had looked carefully to the priming of his pistol.

The coach would stop at Fernleigh Village. The delay there might be a minute. It might be five minutes. But in any case it would suffice. He knew that he was already ahead of the coach, although on a parallel course. The delay at Fernleigh would allow him time to make the cut through the wood to the road and still leave him a minute or two in which to blow his horse and collect himself for the daring of the deed that he contemplated.

Ten minutes later the highwayman drew his horse from a gallop to a canter, which he eased down until the animal was going at a checked trot, the foam dropping in clots from its mouth and its hoofs thuddering impatiently upon the sod. The masked rider was peering to the right in search of some break in the trees that would allow him to push through to the road.

He had now come far enough east of Fernleigh Village. By the glow of the crescent moon he at last discovered one of the many little paths that invariably join with a main road. Immediately he turned the horse into it and pushed forward. The trees hung low about him and scored his face so that he was compelled to lay himself flat along the horse's neck. The animal picked its way among the shadows with the intelligence of long training in a perilous game.

At every break in the woods the black steed pressed forward with a long stride, half walk, half trot. Presently the skies opened out overhead. Before the highwayman lay a deep ditch, beyond which the road wound toward him with an open heath on the other side.

He was in time, he knew, for otherwise he could not have been so late as not to hear the coach rumble past while yet he pressed through the wood.

But he was none too early. From far up the road he heard the dull rumble of wheels, punctuated by the cadences of the horn. Then he distinctly heard the jingle of the harness, the clattering of hoofs and the voices of the two buccaneers singing:

"A roving, a roving,
Since roving's been my ru-u-in,
I'll go no more a ro-o-ving
With you, fair maid!"

THE highwayman hitched himself in the saddle and drew his pistol. He patted the black horse's sleek neck. The animal lifted its splendid head and pricked its ears intelligently toward the oncoming coach.

Suddenly the highwayman gave a start and peered into the half light of the road. A dim figure had arisen in the ditch on the side where the heath began.

Quickly the highwayman covered it with his pistol.

"It's me—Rabbits," whispered a stealthy voice.

"Go back!" commanded the highwayman. "My name is Death. You hear? Death!"

"Sure, Capting," whispered the other with a chuckle. "You bean't a goin' to shoot your friend Rabbits, be you?"

"Oh, it's you," said the highwayman, after a pause. But he cursed softly.

The figure sank down into the ditch.

The rumbling, jingling and singing drew nearer. The driver's whip cracked like a toy cannon in the night. The conductor, knowing that his passengers would sleep little until this much dreaded portion of the road was well behind, put the horn to his lips, aimed the muzzle at the clear stars and blew:

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"A-tootle-ta-too! Toot, toot! A-tootle-ta-too-oo-ooooooo!"

The moment had come!

The highwayman gave the black horse a quick touch with his heels. The animal gathered itself on its haunches and leaped. A great shadow loomed in air over the ditch and came down squarely near the middle of the road.

"Halt!" cried the highwayman, leveling the pistol at a point a few inches to the driver's left and at the heart of one of the singers. "Stand and deliver!"

The driver, who had become more or less used to this sort of thing, pulled on his reins quickly enough, but the highwayman was either impatient or seeking excuse for action.

"What, sirrah! Ye won't! Halt, I say!"

He quickly forced the black steed forward, so that the coach horses started back in affright, plunging slightly.

"Halt, I say, or by——"

He pulled the pistol trigger, still aiming to the driver's left, and at the heart of one of the buccaneers.

It was like history repeating itself, only the highwayman was quicker than Sir Gregory Warfield had been on that certain night. But he was not quick enough.

TWO shots split the night with but a hairbreadth of pause between them. One was from the muzzle of the highwayman's pistol, the other from a weapon in the hand of one of the two figures to the left of the driver.

Third Grog had fired. Full of concern for his five thousand pounds and the expectation of meeting "that road swab," he had ridden all the way from Warfield with his pistol primed and cocked and laid across the bag of gold in his lap.

Just as he fired a bullet ripped the brief space between his head and Richard's.

The highwayman remained poised for a second with the smoking pistol in his uplifted hand. Then he gently collapsed in the saddle and slid to the earth, where he fell in a heap.

"Got him, by Harry!" roared old Grog, rising to his feet and waving his pistol. Then he gave vent to the old buccaneer yell—

"Ou-*ee-e-e-e-ee!*"

Instantly there was the wildest confusion in and around the mail coach. The horses were plunging and the women passengers inside screaming as if they anticipated instant murder. The men poured out from the coach and the driver and the conductor sprang to the ground.

At the same time the black horse turned around and sniffed its prostrate master. With a short whinny it lifted its head and then, like some accomplice in roguery who sees the game is up, the animal leaped toward the ditch. In a second it had sprung across and vanished into the wood.

"Ahoy, there!" roared Third Grog, jubilantly. "H'ist the gangway, ye swabs! I got a wooden leg. Boy!" turning to Richard. "Be ye hurt?"

"Not a whit," said Richard. "But the bullet went so nigh my ear I am deafened!"

Then he burst out laughing.

"So ye've shot a highwayman, Grog? This should make ye respectable afore the law!"

"H'ist the gangway, ye toe-fingered lubbers!" roared Grog, eager to examine his prize.

The "gangway" was hoisted. Richard and Third Grog descended, the latter still holding on to his precious "loot." At the bottom of the ladder they were met by Master Squibbs, who had been enjoying a nap inside the coach.

The trio crowded forward with the others who circled around the masked man.

"Bring a light!" cried Richard, pushing through the circle.

The driver unhitched the axle lantern and brought it to the side of the dead man. They rolled him over, face upward.

"Lord ha' mercy on us!" gasped the conductor, staring down at the sinister masked countenance.

"Let's see his face," said Richard, kneeling down by the dead man and groping for the string that held the mask in place.

He found it and whipped the black cloth away. As he did so a cry went up from everybody.

"Odds——!" and for once Master Squibbs failed to find anything in all his list of fish, bods, buttons, tripe, etc., that would fit the occasion. He just stared, his little hair tuft straight up on end.

Richard gave only one glance at the still, white, upturned face. Then he uttered a great cry:

"Gregory! My cousin, Gregory!"

"B-B-Boy!" groaned Third Grog, sud-

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denly stumbling backward into the arms of the conductor. "What ha' I gone and done! What ha' I gone and done! Sure's death, I'll swing for this!"

RICHARD WARFIELD, after one long look at his cousin's face to assure himself, burst out of the circle of shocked onlookers, walked slowly to the side of the road, stumbled across the ditch and sat down on the grassy bank with his head in his hands.

"Oh, Gregory!" he moaned.

That was all. He did not understand, and he could not command his brain toward any effort to understand. He could not conceive how his cousin could be in two places at once, as it seemed. His only realization was that Gregory had been shot and killed.

Third Grog, in the meantime, was in a different state of mind. After the shock following the discovery of his victim's identity, the instinct of self-preservation sharpened the old buccaneer's wit. He had no particular regret about the death of Sir Gregory Warfield at his hands. He had killed many a better man in his buccaneering days. But he might "swing" for this, and his acute mind traveled hither and thither among possibilities, searching for something that might justify his act.

Of course, Gregory had been masquerading as a highwayman, but it was not so much this fact that would interest the King's authorities as that the man killed was Sir Gregory Warfield, master of Warfield Towers, and shot by a buccaneer.

Like Richard, Third Grog could not understand how Gregory came to be there when they had seen him at the Sign of the Three Jorums just before the coach started. But the fact remained that here was Gregory. Third Grog did not need to tell himself twice that this had been Gregory's final attempt to get rid of Richard Warfield forever and at the same time avert suspicion from himself.

Yet why? Why should Gregory attempt the life of Richard, now that the young buccaneer had gifted the entire deeds and titles to Warfield estate to his cousin and was on his way to the Indies, never again to return to England?

"What's the use argifyin'?" muttered the worried old buccaneer. "He's dead and I killed him, and sure's death I'll swing for it."

The coach driver and the conductor, under the direction of Master Squibbs, laid the body of Sir Gregory close by the ditch. Then arose the question of what was to be done next.

"We will return to Warfield Towers," said Master Squibbs, decisively.

"How are ye to get there?" asked the guard. "We can't turn back. Happen ye might send somebody to Fernleigh Inn for a cart."

"Ah'll go," said a little, slouching, shabby man with ferret eyes, who had appeared among the crowd, coming from none knew where.

"'Tis Master Poacher," said the guard, turning the light upon the newcomer.

"Ah bean't no poacher but a honest man, an' I be Job Omphroy," said the slouchy man sullenly. "Ah hear shootin' an' Ah coom down the road to see what were to do."

"Aye, aye, Rabbits Omphroy," said the guard. "We'll say no more, for, marry, ye may prove right handy to these gentlemen."

Satisfied that the best of a bad business had been made, the driver remounted his box and the guard helped his passengers aboard. Presently the coach rolled on, leaving Richard Warfield, Third Grog, Master Squibbs and Rabbits Omphroy, the mysterious poacher, with the body of Sir Gregory.

"Now, sirrah," said Squibbs, after keenly surveying the little slouchy man, "get ye to Fernleigh Inn. Tell mine host there hath been a mishap and Sir Richard Warfield requires of him a cart and two good horses at once."

"Aye, aye, master," said the poacher, slouching away with subtle rapidity.

As soon as he was out of sight the poacher stopped, took off his cap and scratched his head.

"Here be to do!" he muttered. "Sir Greg'ry Warfield shot. 'Twere the Capting's 'orse, but 'is voice warn't the same. Now, where be the Capting hisself?"

For Rabbits had a personal acquaintance with Captain Death the highwayman. They were members of the fraternity of lawbreakers. Who could tell how far an investigation might reach? And they hanged a man for so little in these parlous times! The poacher decided that he would solve this mystery at the earliest possible moment—for his own safety's sake.

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HALF an hour later Rabbits, the poacher, came back with another man, who drove two horses in a cart. Master Squibbs touched Richard on the arm. The young buccaneer obeyed him like a child. Squibbs, Richard, Grog and Rabbits got into the cart with the body of Sir Gregory, and the return to Warfield was begun.

Although it was now long after midnight, they found the inn of the Three Jorums still lighted up. In the living room they discovered Landlord Holly and his wife in despair. Molly had not returned.

The news of the shooting of Sir Gregory caused a sensation which temporarily diverted the landlord and his wife from their own anxiety. Several of the retainers of the estate were aroused and they escorted the cart to the Towers. Richard also went to the Towers, accompanied by Third Grog, whose return to the Inn had not been marked by any great welcome.

Oddly enough, Master Squibbs went no farther than the Three Jorums, in the tap room of which he sat down and drank some ale with no less inferior a person than Rabbits Omphroy, the poacher.

As the news of the tragedy spread, others dropped into the tap room and sat around in open-mouthed silence. Yet, while there was so little said, none seemed anxious to return to bed. The air fairly palpitated with omen, and Rabbits Omphroy grew nervous, for the little lawyer man from London Town sat there eying him closely over a pot of mulled.

But the desire for sleep finally overcame the idlers in the tap room. One by one they went away, until none was left in the inn of the Three Jorums but Rabbits and Master Squibbs and Landlord Holly and his weeping wife.

Just a little before dawn Master Squibbs's head began to nod, as if ale and the long night had been too much for him. Rabbits eyed him for a little while; then softly arose and slipped out. The moment he did so Master Squibbs opened his eyes and sat up with a jerk. The little man darted to the door in time to see the poacher slouching along the road toward Fernleigh.

"Too*loo*ralay!" muttered Master Squibbs, and promptly he slipped away after Master Omphroy.

Rabbits came to Fernleigh, but made a détour of the Village. Master Squibbs kept straight on, knowing now where the poacher was bound.

THEY came face to face just as the dawn was graying, and right at the spot where Sir Gregory had been shot. Rabbits was studying the tracks of the black horse and was about to follow them into the wood when a voice said at his elbow.

"Odds rabbits! What a glorious day it promises."

The poacher started guiltily and discovered Master Squibbs observing him.

"You were even about to pursue knowledge?" asked Squibbs, smiling. "Commendable—very commendable, forsooth. Odds bods and pullets, let us pursue it together. First, let us discover where that horse came from. One who can track hares——"

"It bean't no to-do of mine," said the poacher sullenly. "Ah wun't meddle."

"Master Omphroy," said Squibbs, with a pained look on his face as he drew a portentous-looking document from his pocket. "Your neck is in danger, if I make no mistake."

He pretended to scan the document, which was nothing but a blank sheet of parchment.

"'One Job Omphroy, *alias* Rabbits—for poaching,'" he murmured. He had learned the poacher's name in the Inn tap room. "Poaching! Odds buttons! That's a hanging phrase."

Rabbits Omphroy quivered like a piece of jelly.

Master Squibbs looked at him and smiled.

"In consideration of services to the King's Majesty," he murmured, putting the document back in his pocket, "we may yet destroy this warrant."

He looked at Job Omphroy, who was turning his cap around and around in his hands and hanging upon every word of this mysterious oracle of the much dreaded law.

"Now let us begin," said Master Squibbs. "We will begin at the end and end at the beginning. Odds hounds! Let me see ye sniff the ground."

Two minutes later they were in the Bracken Wood, following the tracks of the escaped horse, which led straight back to the hollow in the rock; following also the tracks of Sir Gregory Warfield in all his peregrinations of the previous day.

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And the trail ended at the bridge and the Black Pool.

CHAPTER XX

AFTER THE NIGHT

AND now Sir Richard was master of Warfield Towers whether he would or no; and the latter would have been his choice, for being master did not bring Laura any nearer. She loved Gregory and Gregory was dead—shot by Third Grog, Richard's henchman.

Well, what did it matter? What did anything matter? To Sir Richard, as he sat alone in the library at the Towers, the world was mad! In a smaller room across the hall they had placed the body of Gregory. It lay upon the table with a sheet over it.

Master Squibbs was absent. So was Third Grog. The latter had been called to the Inn about ten minutes before—an urgent call—something about Molly being found. As for the lawyer, Sir Richard could not remember when and where he had last seen him.

The dawn had come and now the sun was streaming through the library windows. Yet the lamp still burned upon the table. Richard was staring moodily into the gray ashes of the fireplace.

PRESENTLY there came a rapid stump-and-stamp from the hall. The door was flung open and Third Grog came in. The old buccaneer's face was distorted with grief, pain and rage. His eyes were like a shark's in phosphorescent waters. He fixed them upon his buccaneer protégé and snarled—

"So there ye are, ye sweet innocent!"

Richard looked up with knitted brows.

"Leave me alone if ye love me, Grog," said he.

"Leave ye alone!"

There was no doubt about the animosity in Grog's voice and manner.

"Lord, yes, I'll leave ye alone, seein' as y'are the only person in the world as knows the meanin' o' trouble; hey? And love ye! Why, burn ye, I love ye that much I could ram two foot o' steel through yer lights, ye two-faced, white-livered kiss-behind-doors!"

Richard sprang to his feet and stared at the old man, who had never before addressed an unkind word to him.

"Grog!" he cried. "What ails ye?"

"What ails me!" shouted the buccaneer. "What ails me? And ye have the brass to ask me that—*you!* By Harry, y'are a cool one. Y'are o' the same weave, you and yer murderin' cutthroat of a cousin!"

At this insult to the dead something broke in the strands of Richard's self-control. He uttered a throaty gurgle of fury and his blade flew from its sheath with a metallic *whing*.

"So y'are man enough to face me, are ye?" roared Grog, his wrinkled face lighting up with the old joy of battle.

In a moment the ready cutlas was bared. The buccaneers crossed blades. Instantly Richard felt a sick sensation crawl over him. He was aiming to take the life of the man who had nursed him as a baby, fed him on meat-juice, sugar-water and spoonfuls of rum, the man who had been as a father to him through all the reckless years.

"The world's as mad as I!" he cried with a dry laugh, as he beat aside a terrific thrust.

"Aye, but bein' mad don't change that Molly's dead," sneered the old pirate, pressing hard. "Drownded like a kitten!"

Richard dropped his weapon. Third Grog was so surprised at the action that he failed to complete his stroke.

"Molly—*drowned!*" gasped Richard.

"Aye, drownded!" said Grog, glaring at his former mate and his right hand impatiently twitching the cutlas. "Found drownded in the Black Pool. If ye didn't know it afore, ye at least know why 'tis so.

"I warned ye, by Harry! I warned ye!" went on the infuriated old man, his voice rising to a roar. 'Don't ye play fast and loose wi' my Molly,' says I, and burn yer tricky hide, but ye were doin' that same while ye promised me nay."

Then followed an indescribable scene. Third Grog, plain, foul-mouthed old buccaneer, stood over the young man, who had sunk back, despairing, into the chair. He cursed him as only a man who had lived his life amid the coarsest environment could curse the one thing he ever loved and which, he thought, had betrayed that solitary affection.

Richard was stricken mute. Molly dead, too! He knew upon the instant that she had died by her own hand. And he knew that the responsibility was Gregory's.

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"Do ye deny it?" snarled Third Grog, fingering the cutlas.

"I do that," was all Richard could say.

"Then who broke the lass's heart if you didn't?" the buccaneer demanded mercilessly.

Richard made no reply.

"Burn ye!" went on Grog, "Rabbits Omphroy, as found the poor wench, saw ye a cuddlin' of her on the bridge two nights ago. D'ye deny *that?*"

"I do not," said Richard. "I was there and so was Molly. I but comforted the lass. She was in trouble."

"Aye, marry, she were all o' that! But much good your sort o' comfortin' did. Strike me blind, I could kill ye where ye sit!"

"I wish you would," said Richard, lifting his face to the old man.

In an access of fury Third Grog drew his cutlas arm back, and thus for a few seconds they remained facing each other. Richard's countenance was white and strained. Something in it stayed the fatal thrust.

The old buccaneer, standing there like an avenger with naked cutlas poised, suddenly became incoherent out of a conflict of emotions.

"B-Burn ye, Boy!" he said in a choked voice. "I can't forgive ye, and I can't hurt ye either. Wish afore God I'd poisoned yer feed or let that galley asp scald ye dead. Mansvelt was right. If Morgan had pitched ye to the sharks, Molly'd be alive this minute. But Molly's lost!"

The old man's voice became a drooling whine, punctuated by queer gulps.

"Molly's lost—and so's my Boy."

He seemed to feel that he was becoming mawkish, for he suddenly roared while the tears still trickled down his weathered cheeks:

"Aye, *lost!* For I tell ye, Boy, y'are deader'n a planked Diego to me!"

Then he stumped and stamped away with a series of snorts that were like repressed sobs.

AGAIN Richard was alone, a relaxed figure in the big chair before the dead fireplace. The lamp smoked and the sunlight streamed more brightly through the windows overlooking the old rose garden.

Ten minutes later there arose a confusion of many footsteps in the hall. Again the door was unceremoniously flung open and Third Grog reappeared. He was accompanied this time by Master Squibbs and the poacher, Job Omphroy, *alias* Rabbits.

Third Grog descended upon Richard with a shout and flung both arms about him.

"Boy! Boy!" he yelled. " 'Tis all right! You be cleared! 'Twarn't you! 'Twar Gregory! And thank the Lord I blowed a hole through his measly carcass! Here's to loot!"

Richard sprang from the chair like a roused lion.

"Avast!" he snarled, his eyes blazing, while he pointed to the room across the hall. "Have ye no respect for *anybody's* dead, ye loose-tongued old devil!"

"Odds beetles!" exclaimed Master Squibbs softly, and he diverted attention to the smoking lamp, which he blew out with a decisive puff.

"And now," said the little man in the green coat, "we must settle this matter decorously. Sir Richard, pray be seated. Likewise, Master Third Rum. And speak not of blowing holes. 'Tis a hanging phrase.

"Sir Richard, this is Master Job Omphroy, a man of the woods, who will even now be sworn. Master Omphroy," turning to the poacher and administering a common oath of the time, "may your right hand be struck off if you do not tell the truth. Proceed!"

Then Rabbits Omphroy, turning and twisting his cap in his hands and ever glancing with fearful awe at the face of the man with the blank sheet of parchment in his pocket, told the story of his excursion into the woods with Master Squibbs. Rabbits dealt with facts gathered from the tracks he had followed in the woods, letters on a page that was simple reading to him. It was Squibbs who inferred from the facts.

AS THE lawyer had suggested, they had begun at the end and ended at the beginning. Knowing that the horse would return to its stable, they had paid no attention to how it arrived at the point where the coach was held up, but merely followed its wild dash backward. It went straight to the hollow in the rock.

Here they found it shivering in the brush. Beyond, they discovered the cave. Lying on his back by a dead wood-fire was Captain Death—shot through the heart!

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"It is evident, then," interrupted Master Squibbs, very coolly, "that there was some league between Sir Gregory and this highwayman. They quarreled, and the highwayman was shot. Proceed, Master Omphroy."

The poacher told how Gregory's footprints, which were readily recognized by reason of his specially made London boots, showed he had been to the rock hollow twice. One line of tracks was older than the other. The former came from the rustic bridge below the Black Pool, where, at the end of the tracking expedition, they had found the body of Holly Molly caught in the *débris* at the lip of the pool.

"Sir Greg'ry's tracks coom from the bridge," said Rabbits, who was evidently willing to impart any information that might save his own skin, "and the lass's went up to the Pool from the bridge. They'd been there together and there was signs o' some to-do atween them. There was scuffle marks on the bridge an' finger marks on her right arm, besides that thing in her hand," said Rabbits, looking to Squibbs for corroboration.

"Exactly," said Master Squibbs, handing Sir Richard a piece of lace, such as Gregory wore at his sleeve. "This was in the dead girl's hand."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Richard, starting up. "Did he drown her?"

"No," said Squibbs. "She tore that from his sleeve during the scuffle, which was on the bridge. Master Omphroy informs us that her later footsteps went from the bridge to the pool—alone. She drowned herself."

Relief dawned upon Richard's face.

"But how did my cousin get to the place where the coach was waylaid, when we had left him at the Sign of the Three Jorums?"

"Ah," said Master Squibbs, and turning to Rabbits he said, "You spoke of another line of tracks to the cave."

"Aye," said Rabbits. "Ye seed them with your own eyes, master. They coom from the Inn to the cave an' they coom in a great hurry, smashin' through the bushes so a babby could ha' followed them.

"They were the tracks last made, too. They coom to the horse an' disappeared, so Sir Gregory must ha' mounted the horse. The hoofmarks, plain as snowtracks, went round by the bridge and toward Fernleigh 'All. That's 'ow 'e got there."

"Did he shoot the Captain then?" asked Squibbs. "That time when, after sayin' good-by to Sir Richard at the Inn, he dashed through the woods and took the highwayman's horse and mask?"

"'E done it afore that," said Rabbits. "If Ah ever took a yesterday's rabbit frum a snare, Ah know the Capting had been dead since middle arternoon."

"Then the shooting occurred during the afternoon visit to the cave," said Squibbs. "How did he return to the Towers that time?"

"'Is tracks went through the Bracken Wood, master. He was a going on 'is toes, soft-like, an' he shot a partridge, for I found some breast feathers on his track and a bullet clip among the leaves."

"Too*loo*ralay!" exclaimed Squibbs, pretending the utmost astonishment. "Why, after killing a man, should Sir Gregory go hunting partridges?"

"Ah dunno," said Omphroy dubiously, "any more'n Ah know why a man should 'unt partridges with a 'orse pistol."

"Even so," said Squibbs, smiling. Turning to Sir Richard, he said: "I was in the library here when he entered with the pistol and the partridge. I said that I had heard two shots. He replied that he had missed the first time. In short, the first bullet killed Captain Death. Sir Gregory brought in the partridge to explain the shooting."

"Here is the pistol," continued the little man in the green coat, taking the weapon from the table drawer where Gregory had tossed it.

"Ah!" he chuckled. "There is a name carved on the butt."

He handed the weapon to Sir Richard. On the butt was scratched in rude letters

DEATH

"BY HARRY!" exclaimed Third Grog. "'Twere the same partridge as he give ye to eat, Boy."

There was silence in the room. Master Squibbs was studying Sir Richard, who was staring hard into the fireplace, as if he could not realize the obvious truth of the whole matter.

"Sir Richard," said Master Squibbs, softly, "I know ye loved your cousin, but I fear me he was unworthy it. There are many things I could tell you of his life in

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London—but he is dead. *De mortuis nil*——"

"But tell me this!" interrupted Richard, fighting for a hard-dying belief in his cousin's integrity. "Why should he have attempted my life this last time when I had already left him and was never more to return?"

"I think, as he thought, Sir Richard," said Squibbs, "that ye would ha' returned, and that right soon. Happen this will explain his fear and his motive."

He drew from a breast pocket a piece of paper. It was much crumpled and slightly smeared with blood. Squibbs had found it upon the body of Sir Gregory Warfield.

Richard took the paper wonderingly. He would have given it back to Squibbs, bidding him read it, but there was one name in the world that he himself could have read or written even in the dark. And that name, *Laura*, looked out of the paper at him.

For several minutes all four men were silent while Richard bent forward in his chair and slowly deciphered the writing on the blood-stained paper. It was this:

To Sir Rychard Warfield:
Turn againe, Whyttington!
Laura Fernleigh.

GREGORY was buried in the old graveyard behind Warfield Towers. Of course there was an inquest; but Master Squibbs, of London Town, conducted things with a high hand and convinced the Crowner, somehow, that there were times when it was discreet for commoners to inquire none too closely into the doings of the King's friends. Then Third Grog felt easier about his neck, and Rabbits Omphroy resumed his poaching.

The old buccaneer, as soon as he had time to observe and think on other matters, snorted with indignation when he saw the sign of the Apple and Flagon swinging over the inn door. He challenged Landlord Holly about it.

"Uncle Melanchthon," said the "neffy," with great firmness for him, "Me and Maria thinks as 'ow the changin' of the sign brought us bad luck."

Now, it was not the first time Third Grog had heard of ill luck following a change of name, especially among ships.

"Burn me!" said he. "Ye may be right neffy. Anyways, we'll let the old colors fly a while an' see if the wind don't blow from a diff'rent quarter. But we've got to stand by the noo rule; hey?

"One's for the wit. Two's for the heart. Three's for the cutlas arm. More'n that—y'are drunk. And here's to loot!"

It was many a long day before "the fambly" could speak calmly of poor Molly, but deep down in her woman's heart Maria rejoiced like a tigress that it was a Holly who had slain the betrayer. Maria had a sudden new respect for Uncle Melanchthon; and so had Landlord Holly, for it was the buccaneer's gold that enabled him to build a newer and greater "Apple and Flagon," an establishment which so affected "that Fernleigh swab's" profits that the latter finally went out of business and came to serve in the Hollys' tap room at Warfield!

Sir Richard did not immediately recover his faith in human nature. He could not understand, as Grog did, that there were "villyans o' sorts in the world." He knew of but two types of the human male—the man who laughed and the man who thrust. The man who did both at the same time was an enigma to him.

A sense of delicacy kept him away from Fernleigh Hall, although the little blood-stained note which he carried in his breast pocket was ever urging him to the visit. But one morning a second note ended his days of waiting. It read:

Dear Rychard: My hart hath bled for you through all this dreadfull matter. But is it nott time the gentilman came to Fernleigh? Or must Fernleigh come to the gentilman? Laura Fernleigh.

TEN minutes later he was galloping along the wood path toward the Hall. He nearly rode down Mistress Laura herself within a half mile of Fernleigh. He reined in his horse, sprang to the ground and gathered her in his arms.

"Oh, Laura!" he cried.

"Sir Richard!" she gasped, astonished.

"And so ye loved me that much ye sent for me!" he cried, proudly.

"I?" she cried, innocence stamped on her face. "No, Richard. Of course—I'm glad, but—I did not——"

"Confess, Lady Modesty!" he cried, waving the morning's missive in her face.

The corners of Laura's mouth twitched, but presently she laid a little hand upon his arm, and said:

"Dickon, 'tis my mother's handwriting.

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But—I—I thought you would never come. I—I was becoming—unhappy."

Three hours later—they had to walk fully a half mile!—they came to Fernleigh Hall, where the dame was still working in the blue.

"Lady Fernleigh," said Sir Richard with mock gravity, "is it proper for a dear but quite elderly lady to write love letters to her daughter's suitor?"

Lady Fernleigh looked up with a twinkle. The young buccaneer-Baronet stood before her. Laura's right hand was in his left.

"Ah, dear lad," said Lady Fernleigh, "I knew a Dickon Warfield who fancied the name, Laura, ere ever thy Laura was born!"

AND when his Majesty at Whitehall heard the outcome of the Warfield matter, he was much interested and amused.

"But I would that Sir Buccaneer had killed Gregory with his own hand, and preferably with the sword," he complained. "'Twould ha' been a better ending. Ye agree with me, Dorset?"

And my lord of Dorset, who happened to be standing by, fully agreed with his Majesty.

Then the King forgot all about the matter and made a wager with Sir John Staines that Lady Muddeford could not kick an apple out of his hand.

THE END

Sidestepping The Minors

By Horace Trendon

RATCLIFFE made the mistake of driving the ball shoulder high over the inner corner of the plate. Carmody swung viciously, and the missile fluffed Ratcliffe's hair as he ducked. Johnston, scurrying in from center field, recovered the hit in time to hold Barnes at second base. The two thousand fans in the stands set up a half hearted cheer. Of what avail were runners on first and second, with the score four to one against them in the last half of the ninth inning, and soft-spoken, terrible Ratcliffe in the box? With one man out, moreover, and the weaker half of the batting order coming up?

Ratcliffe wiped his forehead with a grimy glove and threw a curve to Clancy. The crowd began to move toward the exits as Clancy popped up a fly over first base. Reynolds, scarcely moving from his tracks, gathered in the ball and with insolent nonchalance tossed it back to Ratcliffe.

Fagan, the young shortstop, was half way to the plate when Nolan trotted in from the coaching lines and waved him back to the

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bench. The crowd again cheered languidly as Stein, a member of the team solely by virtue of his ability to hit safely in a crisis, picked up a bat and lumbered out.

Ratcliffe pitched cautiously to this batter, who had an irritating habit of making base hits off wide pitches. Stein ignored a fast ball knee high over the inner corner, and Lawrence, umpiring behind the bat, called a strike. Ratcliffe shot the ball over the same spot and Stein struck under it, sending a foul over the grandstand.

With two strikes on the pinch hitter, Ratcliffe tantalized the handful who remained in the stands, and who were anxious to see the game settled and get home for dinner. He smeared with dirt the new ball which Lawrence flung out to him, molded it in his glove, smoothed with his foot the scattered dirt in the box, and finally lobbed a slow ball close to Stein's waist. The batter let it pass, and Ratcliffe again vainly tempted him with an outcurve which passed a foot outside the plate.

Lafferty signaled for another low inshoot. Ratcliffe shook his head, but nodded assent to the second signal. It called for a fast ball, to start directly for the batter, and break outward and downward over the plate. Ratcliffe wound up deliberately and hurled the ball with his easy, deceptive swing. Stein suddenly lunged far in front of the plate and caught the ball before it broke. Dust spurted behind third base and Tommy Martin dashed over to the foul line to intercept the ball, while Barnes leisurely crossed the plate and Carmody galloped down to third. Martin by hard sprinting stopped the hit and hurled it back to the infield, as Nolan caught Carmody in his arms and pushed him back to third base. Stein had pulled up, blowing, at second.

The hard-faced, gray-clad fielders behind Ratcliffe were not a whit less calmly confident. They waited with a bored air while Nolan, again rushing in to the plate, prepared to follow up the attack. The heavy-footed Stein was beckoned in from second, and Thorne, a heady, speedy conscript from the American Association, sent to run in his place. Barry, the third catcher, was summoned from the bench to bat in place of Carrigan, and drive in the two runs that would tie the score. Ratcliffe tossed the ball carelessly to Reynolds while the changes were being made. The remarks of Clancy and Stein from the coaching lines were maddening, to say nothing of those from the bleachers, but one might rattle Ratcliffe when the Ohio ceased to rise in the Spring.

Lafferty signaled for a fast ball outside the plate, intending by a quick throw to catch Thorne, who was leading far off second. Barry, who never had been known to strike at an outside ball, reached out and drove a sharp grounder at the shortstop. The crowd again rose to leave. French dashed in front of the ball, seized it, and juggled it. He grabbed for it a second time and missed, grasped it on the third attempt, and shot it to first, but Barry beat the throw by ten feet. Meanwhile Carmody had crossed the plate, and Thorne was dancing about third, with but one run lacking to tie the score.

THEN the two fat men in the center box stood up on their chairs and smote each other's back, and no one yelled "Sit down, you boobs," because every one behind them was standing on his seat doing the same thing. The Reds had been a consistent second division team for years until, in the middle of the season, the owners had secured Nolan as manager. He had replaced a number of veteran players with new blood from the minor leagues, and although the team was still in fifth place, it was fighting hard and winning games. And a baseball fan loves a fighter only less than he loves a winner.

Now, tearing his line-up to pieces in his effort to win, Nolan sent Enright to bat in place of Carter, the catcher. Barry was off like a shot on the first ball pitched. Lafferty, ignoring Thorne on third, threw to second, but the throw was a shade too far to the left, and Barry slid under the baseman.

Ratcliffe shook his head in response to Lafferty's signal, then walked in to speak to the catcher.

"I'm going to pass him," he said. "Nolan's used up all his pinch hitters. He's only got Hendricks to bat for Stewart, and he's easy. Besides, it gives us a chance for a play at second if we put Enright on first."

Returning to the box he threw four wide balls while the fans jeered, and Enright trotted down to first. Nolan sent Hendricks to bat in place of Stewart, and Ratcliffe

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grinned. But these weak hitters are the very ones who break up games. Hendricks proved to be of a speculative disposition. He gambled against Ratcliffe's superb control for a base on balls, until two strikes were registered against him. The pitcher threw twice to Reynolds in an apparent attempt to catch Enright off first; then, as the baseman returned the ball, he wheeled quickly and shot the sphere over the plate for the third strike.

It would have been the third strike had he caught Hendricks napping as he planned. Unfortunately, Nolan had warned the batter of this trick of Ratcliffe's. The ball sang through the infield, a clean single to short left. Thorne loafed home, watching Barry, who was tearing in from second, while Martin hurried in to field the hit. There was still a chance to shut off the winning run by a quick throw home, but as Martin plunged forward the ball struck a pebble and swerved sharply, passing to his left.

Martin looked at the gray pellet slithering in the grass behind him, then turned and walked to the bench. Hazard, the manager of the Grays, met him half way.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't act like you were trying to play," he growled. "You didn't offer to go after that ball after it passed you."

"What's eating you?" demanded Tommy. "Barry was home before I could start. Want a man to chase his legs off for nothing?"

Hazard muttered something unintelligible. Ordinarily the most reasonable of managers, he knew Martin was not at fault, but his nerves were worn by the strain of a close pennant race with a team which showed glaring weaknesses.

SEATED in the hotel lobby that evening, he was still brooding over the loss of the game, and mulling over plans for bracing up his team, when some one touched him on the shoulder. Looking up and recognizing Nolan, he rose and accompanied the latter to the bar. The two were firm friends off the diamond, the more so as Nolan's club was not a pennant contender.

"The Reds look different from what they did two months ago," observed Hazard, draining his beer at a gulp.

"I've got some pep into them," admitted Nolan modestly. "I'll be up fighting you and Rourke for first place this time next year if I can fill up those two holes in my infield."

"Awful hard to get young blood nowadays," suggested Hazard.

"I got strings out for a couple of good ones. Your old machine's working pretty smooth yet."

"They're all good for three or four years. I'll have men to fill in when they begin to slip."

"One more good pitcher and you'd have the rag cinched," said Nolan critically. "You been working Ratcliffe double tides lately."

"You can't work that old war horse too hard. His wife's been sick, but that don't hurt his work neither. You got a lot of breaks to-day. French and Tommy Martin lost the game, not Ratty."

"Tommy ain't the man he was five years ago," said Nolan compassionately. "Lord, what a player he was that year you won the world's series!"

"Tommy's worth a dozen outfielders yet," sharply retorted Hazard, as he saw what was coming. "'Course he ain't getting any faster. He's been in the league nine years, but say, if that big cheese I've got on first had half Tommy's brains, we'd be so far out in front you couldn't see us with a telescope. That little fellow knows what you're going to do before you know it yourself."

"If brains was all a player needed you'd be on first yet."

"Lord, yes," muttered Hazard. "I wish I could transplant some of Martin's gray stuff into that ivory conk of a Reynolds. If I could find a drill his head wouldn't turn the point of!" he added with feeling.

"Tommy ain't hitting so well this year."

"He don't show up in the averages, but he makes hits when they count. I wish none of my players was any worse."

"I could use Tommy handy myself," mused Nolan. "Of course you've got Simpson to put in his place. He's pretty near as good as Tommy now, and he's coming where Tommy's going. But I got nobody you'd want unless it's Lonegan, and he's too good a man to let go of."

"What good is Lonegan to me?" demanded Hazard, who had for two weeks been figuring how he might get him. "I've got three air tight pitchers now, and two more pretty fair ones."

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"You haven't got a man you dare send in against a good club except Ratcliffe and Muller and Strank," said Nolan dispassionately, "and Ratty won't last the month the way you're working him. Lonegan's no world beater, but he'd win a lot of games with hitters like the Grays behind him."

"I can't spare Martin," said Hazard with finality. "What d'you want of an old timer like him, anyway? You want men that'll last till you get a first-division team built up."

"I want a heady player to steady my youngsters," lied Nolan glibly. So the two fenced for an hour, and so they might have fenced for days had not the need of both been pressing. Hazard proved the better bargainer, forcing Nolan to throw Hendricks in with Lonegan. He did not want Hendricks, but some other club might. A man who can play ball at all is always an asset.

"WELL, Hazard's traded me to Nolan," was Martin's cheerful greeting to his wife later in the evening. Carrie Martin always traveled the circuit with Tommy, and she knew more baseball than most managers.

"Tommy, he wouldn't!"

"Maybe he wouldn't, but he's done done it," replied Tommy.

"What for?"

Tommy shrugged his shoulders.

"He's got Simpson for the outfield and he's shy on pitchers."

"Who'd he get for you?"

"Lonegan and Hendricks."

"That's not so bad. They're both good men," said Carrie, mollified to know that Tommy had not been held cheaply. "But what's eating Hazard?"

"I don't know," replied Tommy indifferently. "He was sore about losing the game, for one thing."

"Why, the Indian!" ruffled Carrie.

She was thirty, but being small, blonde, and dimpled, appeared little more than twenty. If you can imagine a yellow butterfly of a pugnacious aspect, you will have an idea of Carrie in a temper.

"Couldn't he see the ball took a bad hop?" she went on.

"The scorer gave me an error."

"What does he know about it? You never touched the hit. Ratty lost the game himself. He'd have got Stein if he'd given him a low inshoot when Lafferty called for it. Stein always murders an outdrop."

"Everybody makes mistakes."

"What does Nolan want of an outfielder, anyway? He's got four."

"I guess he only wants me to trade. He's after a shortstop to plug up that hole in his infield. He ain't offered me a contract."

"Gee, wouldn't it be fierce if we had to play in the minors?" said Carrie.

"I ain't going back to the minors for five years yet," said Tommy. "I can play just as good ball as I ever could."

Carrie was about to speak, but looked at him and checked herself. When a player can no longer throw a ball across the diamond he insists that he is as good as ever, but Carrie saw that Tommy really believed it.

"Anyway I know two clubs that won't waive on me," he continued.

"Tommy, I will not sign with Brooklyn," declared Carrie. "I won't play with a tail ender, and I never liked Bill Dahlen anyway."

"I guess it's go where we're sent," said Tommy philosophically.

"I guess it isn't," retorted Carrie. "I'll quit the game first. We've got enough to live on."

Luckily she was not forced to carry out her threat. As Hazard had guessed, Nolan had no place for Tommy, but he badly wanted a promising young shortstop named Miller, who was the chattel of the Wolves, and he knew that Rourke, manager of the latter team, badly needed an outfielder who had been through the fire. Within twelve hours he had consummated the deal by wire.

"I'd like to use you myself," Nolan explained to Tommy, "but I want young—that is, I've got plenty of fly-chasers, but Miller just rounds out my infield. You know Rourke's outfielders are always getting laid up."

"Yes, I know," said Tommy. "It's cost him lots of games, too."

"Well, he's trying hard to land the pennant, and he wants a good seasoned fielder," said Nolan. "You ought to get a wire from him to-day with terms. Don't let him get you too cheap, Tommy. He needs a man bad."

"I won't," grinned Tommy. "And if I would Carrie wouldn't."

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However, Rourke's salary offer, when it came, was fairly generous.

"Sure, we'll sign," exulted Carrie, when Tommy showed her the telegram. "Gee, Tommy, if we can only beat Hazard out of the pennant!"

"If Rourke don't keep me on the bench too much," demurred Tommy.

"He won't," Carrie confidently averred. "He knows ball players too well."

Carrie was herself a remarkably good cold-blooded judge of players, but not where Tommy was concerned. She knew he was slipping, but still classed him as one of the league's best.

"Wire him for transportation right away, and don't forget to wire collect," she ordered.

THEY joined the Wolves the next day at Chicago, to find that Rourke's speedy regular outfielders were by some ill chance simultaneously free from sprains and charley horses. Tommy therefore drew the salary of a corporation lawyer for sitting on the bench three hours a day and watching the others work. Whereat, being full of the intention of making Hazard repent his trade, he chafed mightily.

"If I can only get in to play against the Grays!" he told Carrie, as the Wolves returned home early in September for a long stay.

It was then established that the pennant lay between the two teams. The Grays, reënforced by Lonegan, were playing cyclonic ball, but the Wolves were only two games behind them when Hazard's men arrived to open a four-game series.

"I'm praying Sterrett breaks a leg," said Carrie viciously. "I don't see what Rourke's thinking of to play him."

Whatever it was, Rourke continued to think of it, and Tommy gloomed on the bench during the first three games, while Carrie sat in a box and told Mrs. Jack Carson, wife of a Wolf pitcher, that "Tommy would have got that one," whenever a ball dropped safely in the outfield. When she had a chance Mrs. Carson told Carrie what Jack would do to the Grays if Rourke would send him in.

Ratcliffe pitched the Grays to victory in the first game, but Rourke's fighters batted Muller and Strank freely and won the next two. The fourth battle fell on Saturday. The Wolves were but one game behind. If they won, the sporting writers gravely announced, they would lead the league by a percentage of just .622457 to .622453 for the Grays.

It was a foregone conclusion that Hazard would pitch Ratcliffe, whom he had spared in the previous fortnight's contests with second-division clubs, and who was again ready to do two men's work. Before noon the fans were packed by thousands outside the grounds, waiting for the bleacher gates to open.

"Some money here," commented Carrie, viewing the mass of humanity which had overflowed the stands and packed against the ropes stretched outside the foul lines. "Wonder how much Rourke would give for an air tight pitcher to-day."

"I'll bet Jack beats Ratty if Rourke puts him in," said Mrs. Carson.

"Jack's warming up," said Carrie, "and Slater with him. Slater 's got a lot of stuff on the ball."

"I don't see what Rourke keeps that big cheese around for," snapped Mrs. Carson. "One thing, nobody could ever say Jack had a yellow streak."

"If Ratcliffe only beans Sterrett so Tommy can get a chance!" Carrie besought. "But Ratty never hits a batter."

"Tommy used to be a great little player," sweetly remarked Mrs. Carson, who was rather bored.

"He is right now better than anybody Rourke's got," retorted Carrie. "Tommy's only two years older than Jack."

"Two years makes a lot of difference. If Tommy was only hitting!"

"Every batter slumps sometimes. I'll just bet you a twenty-five dollar hat Tommy bats over two-eighty for the season."

Mrs. Carson declined to speculate. She was not manager and treasurer of her family.

"There goes Slater in the box," she observed. "Rourke must be going dippy."

"Slater's as good a pitcher as there is in the country if you can keep his goat tied," assented Carrie, "but if his feet ever leave the ground—good-night."

"Rourke'll just about let him lose the game and then put Jack in," mourned Mrs. Carson.

"Jack couldn't get away with his slow ball for nine innings against the Grays," retorted Carrie. "Gee, if Rourke had

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Hazard's pitchers this race would be a pipe."

"Well, nobody ever traded Jack off in the middle of a pennant race."

"Nobody ever wanted to trade for him in the middle of the race either. Rourke was mighty glad to get Tommy."

HOSTILITIES were averted as Reynolds fumbled a hard-hit ball and allowed Carrick of the Wolves to score from third, the much maligned Slater having made short work of the Grays in the first half of the inning. Mrs. Carson's reply was drowned in the thundered acclaim of twenty-five thousand fans, who began to hope that Slater might remain anchored. Slater's goat, as Carrie remarked, wandered ever on an insecure tether, but he was invincible when his team was in the lead. This day he "had everything." His fast ball looked the size of a pea, his curve broke viciously just as the batter swung, his slow ball caused the heavy-hitting Grays nearly to break their backs reaching for it, and his control was deadly. One questionable hit was the sum of the Grays' achievements with the bat when the seventh inning opened. Hazard finally left the coaching lines, where he had been prowling nervously, for the seclusion of the players' pit.

"Hazard's quit," observed Mrs. Carson.

"You don't know the Gray Fox," rejoined Carrie. "He's figuring out a way to punch a hole in that defense. Pretty soon you'll hear something break."

Meanwhile Ratcliffe was just as much a puzzle to the Wolves, and that one first-inning run was their total. Walters opened the seventh for the Grays, and drew a base on balls. French was on his way to the plate when Hazard stopped him. The Gray Fox's ponderings had borne fruit.

"Go up there and soak the first ball," he ordered. "We've been waiting the fellow out till he's laying the first one in the groove for a called strike. Forget about bunting. Lay into that straight fast one and tear the cover off it. It ain't baseball, but it's the way to beat Slater."

French, whose mind ran in a groove, obeyed without question the edict of the master mind. He larruped the first ball with such force that it nearly took a leg off Jordan, who, expecting to field a bunt, was running in from first base.

"Bing!" said Carrie. "It's broke."

To Reynolds, next up, Hazard repeated his instructions, to the delight of the big first baseman, who hated to bunt. His wallop sent the ball crashing against the bleachers in left field. When it was relayed back, Reynolds was seated on second base and French and Walters had crossed the plate, putting the Grays a run ahead.

Rourke, cursing earnestly but quietly, rushed into the diamond and jerked Slater from the mound. The big pitcher's goat was clearly roaming far afield, and the manager knew that only a slaughter could result if he were allowed to finish. The fans groaned as Jack Carson was sent in without a chance to warm up his pitching arm. But Carson quickly caught Reynolds off second base by a quick throw, Adams's hot line drive was gathered in in sensational style by Jordan, and Jones's long fly retired the side. The fans took heart again. It was still possible to pull out the game if Carson could hold safe the slugging Grays.

The Wolves worked doggedly but without luck to tie the score in their half of the inning, but in the eighth Carson hit safely. Carrick drove a vicious grounder at Adams, who fumbled, and the fleet fielder reached first in safety. Leonard bunted prettily along the first base line. Reynolds fielded the ball and touched Leonard as he passed, but Carrick and Carson had advanced to second and third.

Sterrett had started from the bench when Rourke caught the dumb appeal in Tommy Martin's eyes. Rourke had seen that look in the eyes of a pit bulldog straining at the leash. Instantly he checked Sterrett and waved Tommy to the plate.

Tommy could tell what sort of ball Ratcliffe would throw before the ball left his hands, but Ratcliffe knew Tommy's weakness—a fast ball waist high over the inner corner of the plate—and he shot in two such with blinding speed. Tommy let the first one pass and Lawrence called it a strike. The second he struck at, sending a foul over the grandstand.

Then ten thousand fans swore and other ten thousand wept, and Rourke anathematized himself for answering Tommy's plea. Ratcliffe knew he had the batter beaten, twenty-five thousand fans knew it, the score of Wolves in the pit knew it, and Rourke knew it. He half rose from the bench with the desperate expedient in mind of substituting another batter, but stopped

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himself as he caught Tommy's eye again. It told him that Tommy did not know what every one else in the grounds knew, and Rourke, who understood practical psychology, as a successful manager must, understood also that no man is really beaten unless he himself knows it.

Ratcliffe tempted Tommy with another ball which broke inside the plate, then shot a third over the corner. Tommy swung desperately at it, and lifted the puniest fly ever scored as a base hit. The ball wabbled feebly in the air behind second while shortstop, baseman, and center fielder raced for it. It dropped in the center of the converging triangle and glanced past the fielder. Carson and Carrick reached home easily, while Tommy scampered on to the momentarily deserted second base.

Then came Jordan, always a dangerous batter. Twenty-five thousand fans were howling at Ratcliffe and bellowing encouragement at the batter. They dug into baseball history and reminded the pitcher of every mishap in his long career, to the wild pitch which had lost a pennant for the Grays six years before. They solicitously advised him to apply for a job on the subway, voicing the critical opinion that he was big and ugly enough creditably to fill such a position. They inquired tenderly how it would seem to go back to the minors.

They might have stampeded the goat of an ordinary pitcher, but Ratcliffe was not an ordinary pitcher. He was merely a piece of catapultic machinery driven by a mind machine-like only in its precision. He bit off another piece of slippery elm to provide the moisture for his spitball, and regarded Jordan with a dispassionate, critical glance, as a woodsman might survey a tree to fell which was a tiresome but necessary part of the day's work.

So far as Jordan was concerned, Ratcliffe's confidence was justified. That redoubtable hitter drove a sharp bounder well inside third base. It was far too sharply hit for the baseman to reach, but French, traveling at railroad speed, reached out his long arm and the ball stuck in his bare hand. Turning, with the snap throw which had made him famous, he whipped the ball to first, where it arrived a bare foot ahead of Jordan.

"Home! Home!" shrieked a dozen Grays from the field and the bench, and Reynolds turned and threw, but the instant's delay was fatal. Baseball crises hinge, not on seconds and half seconds, but on tenths and twentieths. Tommy Martin had taken a good lead off second before the ball was hit. Without stopping to look at the play he turned third and raced for home. Ten feet from the plate he saw Lafferty set himself to take Reynolds' throw, and he threw himself feet foremost, squirming behind the catcher as the latter reached to tag him.

The Gray infield swarmed up in angry protest as Lawrence signaled, "Safe." Lawrence, a little man with an undershot jaw, waved them aside indifferently as Tommy got up and brushed his clothes, trying hard to appear careless of the roaring appreciation of the twenty-five thousand.

"Not fast enough for your team, huh?" he hissed at Hazard as he passed the Gray manager. Hazard affected not to hear.

THE crowd settled back in content as Atwater's grounder retired the side. Carson had made the Grays eat out of his hand for two innings. Surely, with a two-run lead, he would hold them safe for another round. But that formidable first half of the Gray batting order was up again. Johnston opened with a clean hit to center. The crafty Hazard again changed his plan of attack.

"Bunt," he directed tersely, as Walters picked up his bat. "With two runs to tie they won't be looking for it."

The play was executed perfectly. Carson sized up Walters, a left-handed hitter, nervously poising his bat, and hurled the sphere on the outside, planning to make him hit to left field. Walters drew back his bat for a swing, then checked himself as he saw that the ball would pass outside the plate.

Carson, rising to the bait, shot another ball just over the corner. Walters slid his left hand down the bad handle and bunted. The tap was perfect, close inside the third base line, and with just force enough to die in the grass half way between home and third. Atwater came in at top speed to field it, but he had been playing deep, and Walters was the speed sensation of the season. He crossed first base four feet ahead of the ball, while Johnston landed at second unchallenged.

"Sacrifice, sure," said Hazard, in response to French's look of inquiry. "Move those two up a base and a hit'll tie the score."

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French's bunt was a replica of Walters's, but Atwater was looking for it, nor was French so fast as Walters by a full second in the hundred yards. The ball beat him to first, but the play left Johnston and Walters safely perched on third and second, with Reynolds, the clean-up hitter of the team, advancing to the bat. The fans gripped their seats and again resorted to prayer.

Reynolds was the perfect type of the natural slugger. Batting right-handed, as do most sluggers, his drives usually went low and to left field. Rourke's outfielders bunched toward left and center. Tommy Martin crept closer toward the diamond, knowing that a lightning return would be necessary to keep the sprinter Walters from scoring from second on a hit.

Crack! The ball caromed from Reynolds's bat, a low line-drive close to the left foul line. Away went Johnston and Walters as Tommy Martin leaped to meet the ball. Walters, looking over his shoulder as he rounded third, saw Tommy scoop the hit, and saw the sweep of his arm as he threw. His quick brain realized that the drive had been too fast, the return too quick, and the throw too short for even his Mercury feet to reach home. He stopped and sauntered back to the base.

Reynolds, galloping over first, stopped fifteen feet on the way to second and looked about him.

"Come back, you bonehead, come back," screeched Ratcliffe from the coaching lines. Reynolds scrambled back, and in the instant Jordan met him on the run and jammed the ball against his ribs while he was ten feet from the sack. Tommy had outguessed both runners and had thrown, not home, but to first.

Jordan was no heavy-witted Reynolds. Without looking he knew that a gray streak was tearing in from third, and disengaging himself from Reynolds with a jerk, he turned and flung the ball home. Walters, in that hurried glance over his shoulder, had mistaken the direction of Tommy's throw, but he saw his error as soon as he turned. Even thus belated, his dash for home had every chance to succeed. The twenty-five thousand, craning their necks to see the play, held their breaths as Walters hurled himself at the rubber, while Schaefer's itching hands reached for Jordan's throw. Then as the ball thudded into Schaefer's big mitt the catcher, squeezing it in both hands, dropped his bulk upon Walters as the runner slid, pinning the latter fast with his foot six inches short of the coveted plate.

The Wolves came running in, while the playing field behind them disappeared under a wave of men, as Lawrence signaled, "Out." Hazard turned his back as he saw Martin coming.

"Too slow for your team, huh?" Tommy again grated in his old manager's ear.

"Grrmph!" said Hazard.

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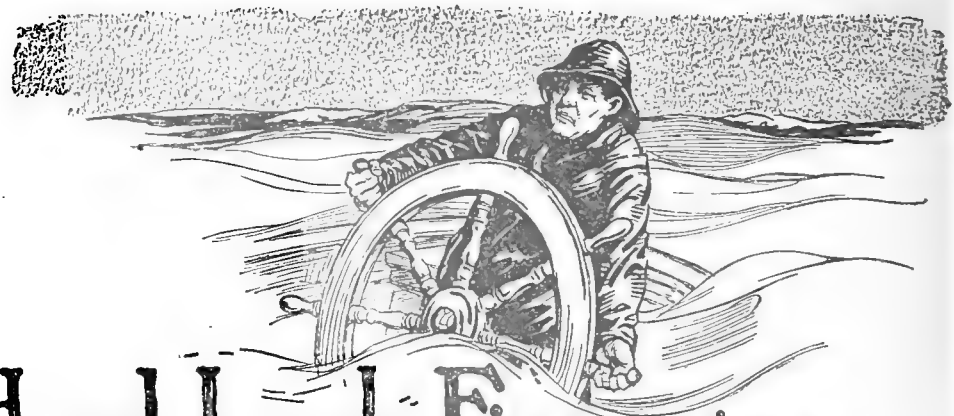

Hard-Luck Finnegan

A Tale of the Deep-Sea Fishermen

By Frederick William Wallace

CAPTAIN MICHAEL FINNEGAN was an optimist of the first water, and for a skipper who was universally known among the men of the deep-sea fishing fleets by the sobriquet of "Hard-Luck Finnegan" he was the most cheerful specimen of a down-and-outer it would be possible for one to meet in a dog's age. Mind you, there was nothing wrong with Finnegan himself. He was no booze fighter, and possessed no vices which could be chalked up against his peculiar streak of misfortune, but in everything he did Fate always dealt him a wallop which left him gasping, but always ready to toe the line again.

The skipper was a clever navigator, as far as fisherman's navigation goes. He was a good fish killer and a very careful sailor man, and what is more important, the gangs all liked him. The best of fishermen, however, can hardly be expected to ship with a skipper who seems to have the peculiar faculty of driving butt end first into all the hard luck knocking around the Banks, and the result was that Finnegan found himself out of a vessel and forced to command a very humble schooner carrying two dories and fishing in the narrow waters of the Bay of Fundy.

Hard-Luck Finnegan happened to be in Anchorville when the old ninety-five-ton "toothpick" halibutter *Ayacucho* arrived with her skipper, Judson Kemble, disabled with a broken ankle. The *Ayacucho's* owners, not wishing to have the vessel lying to the dock until Kemble recovered, scouted around for another skipper to take her out, and as vessel masters were scarce they sent for Finnegan.

"Now, Captain Finnegan," said Mr. Dickie, the managing owner; "the *Ayacucho's* got her gang an' stores aboard, so you'll please get to sea right away. You'll be very careful with her, an' run no risks. The vessel's insured, but we'd sooner have her a fishin' these days, with the good prices goin' for halibut. Take no chances whatever. She's a trifle old, ye'll please remember, an' ye'll need to handle her careful——"

The grizzled Finnegan laughed happily.

"Sure, Mr. Dickie, an' 'tis mesilf that has th' name o' bein' a careful man, an' I'm thinkin' Judson Kemble ain't got th' name o' bein' over cautious. Ef th' *Coocho* kin stand his drivin', I cal'late she ain't a goin' t' lose a rope yarn with mine. I niver was a sail carrier——"

The vessel owner nodded.

"N-no, that's true enough, Captain, but —but ye've been a trifle unfortunate. Ye took th' masts out of th' *Carrie B. Watson* y' know——"

"Lor' bless ye, sir," interposed Finnegan,

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"but that wasn't with carryin' sail, ye'll mind. They were rotten in th' steps an' she simply rolled them out in a ca'm. I niver was a sail carrier, an' I'll promise ye that th' *Coocho* 'ull be snugged down quicker an' sooner than any vessel I ever had th' handlin' of. I'm out t' kill my hard luck this time, Mr. Dickie, an' I'll be as careful as a mother with her first babe."

So, on a warm May morning, the *Ayacucho* swung out past Anchorville Heads bound on a long halibut trip to the north and east grounds with an eight-dory gang and Hard-Luck Finnegan to the wheel. The crowd—a rough and tough Anchorville mob who had followed the redoubtable "Driving Jud Kemble" ever since the trip he had made in the ill starred *Annie Crosby* —sat around the decks rigging halibut gear and passed loud-voiced comments on Finnegan's reluctance to spread sail.

"Look at her now!" cried one man, loud enough for the skipper to hear. "A nice little breeze like this, an' her down to th' four lowers. 'Tis positively sinful. Ef Jud Kemble were here he'd have all th' muslin hung an' be down to th' Cape by sundown——"

Finnegan smiled and twirled the wheel. "That's all right, John," he said. "You ain't with Jud Kemble now. Th' four lowers is quite enough for this vessel on a squally day like this. We ain't got no ice in her yet, an' with nawthin' but her ballast she's carryin' all she'll stand with safety. We're goin' fishin', not yacht racin'." And the gang chewed and spat disgustedly.

"Waal, shucks!" growled they. "This is a goin' t' be a walk of a trip. Finnegan's got about as much nerve as a sick, crawlin' cat. She'll never make enough speed t' take the kinks out th' log line at this rate. Ef Jud Kemble c'd see us now, he'd drown hisself with shame at seein' the ol' *Hootchie Cootchie* mishandled so!"

WHETHER the *Ayacucho* herself felt ashamed of her new skipper's carefulness it is hard to say, but she crawled dejectedly around the coast at a snail's pace and made the entrance to the Gut of Canso after four days' leisurely ambling under four lowers. When they made Cranberry Island, a snow squall struck in from the nor'west, and Finnegan had the rags off her in jig time and was lying to under foresail and jumbo before the wind began to pipe up a decent sailing breeze.

"Y' see, boys," said Finnegan to the indignant crowd rolling up the mainsail with curseful comments, "this here Canser ain't no place t' be pokin' around in thick weather, an' iver since I missed stays in the ol' *Andrew Coston* an' hung her up on Mackerel Rock, I don't believe in takin' chances. We'll let her hang ontil this blows over; then we'll git our ice aboard an' strike for our baitin' at th' Madaleens."

"Don't see no reason why she couldn't make Canser in this bit o' a flurry," growled a man. "'Tain't a blowin' no gale o' wind, as I kin see. Ef Juddy Kemble war here, he'd poke her in quick enough."

"Aye," chipped in another of the gang, "ef Juddy Kemble was on her now, 'tis makin' our first set off th' Bird Rocks we'd be by this time."

Finnegan laughed.

"Aye, Tom, but 'tis Careful Mike Finnegan that's sailin' th' *Coocho* this trip an' not Drivin' Jud Kemble. We'll git in soon enough, so don't worry."

Twenty hours later the wind eased up and they shot into Canso and loaded ice and salt. When the hatches were battened down and the tide served, Finnegan went ashore to look at the weather bulletin, and came aboard with an apologetic smile.

"We'll not go out this tide, boys," he said. "Forecast says 'Strong nor'west winds,' so we'll hang to th' wharf ontil it fairs up. Tain't no use beatin' up th' Straits in this——"

"Why not?" growled the gang. "Let's git on our way to th' Madaleens. Ef we wait for fair winds we'll never git our bait, an' there's th' whole o' th' Bank fleet makin' for the Islands."

"Let 'em go," answered Finnegan. "Th' herrin' 'ull be around th' Madaleens for a month or more yet, an' there'll be enough for all of us. I ain't takin' no chances in beatin' up them Straits o' Canser since I run th' *Oleander* on Sand P'int. 'Twas jest sech a breeze as what's makin' up, and in them narrow channels thar's all kinds o' flukes an' back drafts a comin' off'n th' hills. It cost nigh four hundred dollars t' pull th' *Oleander* off."

And while Captain Finnegan went below whistling a song to himself, the gang hung around the decks and watched the Gloucestermen and Lunenburgers standing out through the Net Rock Passage bound for

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their herring bait at the Magdalen Islands.

"What kind of a skipper does that gazabo call himself?" growled John Timmins. "'Tis runnin' as deck hand on a ferryboat in Boston Harbor he sh'd be. Ain't he got no nerve at all? Gee! I've a bit o' a girl to home what 'ud run him under ef she was skipperin' a vessel. Look what he calls a breeze! Lord Harry, boys; let's go up to th' post-office an' send a letter to Juddy Kemble. He'll hev a fit over this."

And the crowd trailed off to write the *Ayacucho's* former skipper a scrawling screed detailing all the careful Finnegan's doings since the schooner cast off from Anchorville wharf. Among the epithets bestowed upon Mike were such figurative phrases as "coodunt carry biskits to a chaned bare"; "nerve of a T Dock willyboy"; "afraid of gittin' his feet wet"; "should be to hoam mindin' calfs an' sheap," and so on. Finnegan still whistled.

II

THE *Ayacucho* managed to sneak up to Port Hawkesbury in light airs, and, for the first time since leaving the home port, Finnegan had staysail, balloon, and topsails set. Off the port they lay for another twenty hours waiting for a fair wind to carry them across the North Bay to the Magdalens. The gang remonstrated, but the skipper came across with the usual objection.

"It's no manner o' use to go bucketin' an' beatin' around in that shoal water Bay with them no'therlies raisin' a chop. I mind th' time I was in th' *Constellation* an' lost all th' dories off'n her decks in that same Bay. It's sure a tough place in a wind——"

"Say, skip," interrupted John Timmins sullenly, "is this a fisherman or a sick millionaire's yacht you're runnin'? What are we—deep-sea trawlers or a bunch o' Summer rusticators from th' city out for a little sail? D'ye think we're liable t' be seasick in a little swell? Or afraid o' gettin' our feet wet in th' nasty spray? For th' sake of our common pride, git th' muslin on th' *Hootchie* an' git acrost to th' Madaleens. Every blame' Gloucesterman an' Lunenburger is laughin' at us, an' ashore they call this vessel th' *Crawlin' Cootchie*."

Finnegan laughed.

"Let 'em say what they like, John. 'Tis halibuttin' we're a goin', not sailin'. 'Tain't yer hard drivers what's allus draggin' sail an' hustlin' on passages what comes out best when th' stocks are made up. I've been up against a hard-luck streak too long now t' be runnin' chances. I'm out t' kill it this trip. Git yer gear overhauled an' ready, an' try an' forget th' way Judson Kemble used t' do things. I'm gettin' sick o' hearin' 'bout him every five minutes."

And with a little gesture of annoyance—the first sign of it that the gang had seen—the skipper went below.

THEY got outside next day and crawled out past Cape Porcupine and the Judique Highlands under all sail. At nightfall, when Port Hood was abeam, it commenced breezing up from the sou'west, and, to the disgust of the gang, Finnegan ordered the staysail, balloon jib and topsails in. There was an American halibutter on the lee quarter shaping a course for the Islands, and the language of the crowd when she hauled ahead was sulfurous, to say the least.

"Oh, you ol' rat!" growled Timmins aside, stamping the staysail into the box. "Wouldn't I jest like to have ye crammed in this here box an' be jumpin' on your ol' carcass! Lettin' that ol' Gloucester plug overhaul th' *Cootchie*—her that can show heels to th' best o' them!"

And out on the bowsprit and aloft on the crosstrees the men rolled up the sails to the accompaniment of vicious tugs and lurid oaths. Finnegan heard, and still smiled.

THEY made Entry Island out of a smother of rainy mist, and Careful Mike had the jib in and the mainsail rolled up as soon as they struck five-fathom water. It was thick in the Bay, and with so many fishing vessels at anchor and standing in and out, Finnegan was jumping with anxiety. Twice they were within an ace of being run down by hard driving Gloucestermen bound out for the grounds with their bait aboard, and when the *Ayacucho*, under foresail and jumbo, refused to tack and drifted down upon an anchored Frenchman, Finnegan just managed to let go his anchor in time to prevent a mix-up.

"Why didn't the ol' swab keep th' mains'l on her while workin' in here?" growled a man. "What a lubber's way to come in to anchor! Here we are, now, bung up agin this S'int Malo craft an' away outside th'

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rest o' th' fleet. Give her all th' cable, he says, so we'll hev t' bust our hearts out windlassin' it all in again. Sink me! I never was shipmates with sich a spineless skipper in all my gaudy life afore!"

Though they were anchored four miles off from Amherst, yet Finnegan would not take the schooner any closer in. It was a sullen and cursefully indignant trio which rowed him ashore to the wharf. There were about forty fishing vessels in the Bay waiting for bait, and upon the wharf and the beach loafed a good hundred or more trawlers, all eager to hear and chew over scandal and gossip. To this receptive gang the *Ayacuchos* retailed their trials with Finnegan, and when that worthy came down from the telegraph office the jeers and jibes of the crowd rang in his ears. The timid skipper took no notice of their chaff, and though he was subjected to a running fire of rough pleasantries during the whole four days they were lying in to Amherst Island, yet he did not evince annoyance.

"Let 'em talk," he remarked to the skipper of another vessel. "I've been up against hard luck all my life, and I'm for takin' no more chances. I'm runnin' th' vessel, not th' gang, an' when I want t' take in sail, I'll take it in whether they like it or not."

"Aye, that's all right, Cap'en Mike," replied the other, "but you know how th' boys feel. The *Ayacucho's* a fast sailer, an' that gang have been used to Juddy Kemble's drivin'. What kin you expect? I like t' see a vessel sail myself, an' no man likes to have a skipper haulin' down his kites afore there's any need for it. What's come over you, Finnegan? You ain't by no means a narvous man. You've seen some rough dustin' in your day. Why don't you sock it to that ol' toothpick some breezy day an' show that crowd what's what? She kin stand it, I cal'late."

Captain Mike smiled.

"Can she, John?" he said quietly. "She's eighteen year old, an' her mains'l is th' best sail she has. Her iron knees hev rusted out, an' her starn framin' is punky with dry rot. Her butt ends are shaky, an' she ain't been calked this season. She leaks quite a bit—jest a bit too much for my likin'. Her iron work aloft is 'most worn through, an' her whole framin' an' plankin' is shook up with Kemble's sail draggin'. Now, John, with a vessel in that condition, an' a man with my unfortunit reputation, how would ye like t' be in my place ef I took chances with her, drove her, an' lost her? I lost my own vessel once through no fault of my own, an' I've put two others ashore. I've lost sails an' dories oftener than I care to think on, but—" and into his voice there entered an iron ring— "though I'm careful, I hev never lost my nerve, an' some o' these fine days I'll show them sail carriers a thing or two."

And he strolled down to the wharf end where his dory was waiting for him.

The other skipper cut a fill of tobacco and watched him go.

"You're all right, Mike, an' I don't blame you," he muttered to himself, "but I'd like t' see you rouse that gassy gang o' yours up an' show them a thing or two. An' you're th' boy what kin do it ef you want to."

III

THE *Ayacucho* got her herring bait at Grindstone after dodging around the Magdalens for a week. On her passage to the grounds off the Bird Rocks in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, Finnegan passed orders for the balloon jib to be unbent and stowed away.

"Aye," said the gang. "Stow it away, for Heaven's sake! Th' light sails sh'd ha' bin left to home for all th' use they're gittin'. Th' blame' things hev bin under th' stops so long that th' mildew is in 'em. Condemn our gory eyes for shippin' with sich a crawlin' pedler! Hope he'll fish better than he sails, sink him!"

Was Finnegan aware of the remarks made about him? If he wasn't, it was no fault of the men. The gang did not lower their voices when passing their comments, and when the skipper dropped below for a "mug-up" he was reasonably sure of hearing some bull-roared reflection upon his timidity in carrying sail. At meal times in the forecastle men would jeer and joke among themselves about it, and apologize to Finnegan with a sarcastic—

"Excuse me, skip, I didn't know you were there."

Even the cook took a hand, and as he busied himself around his stove and galley sink, he sung out *his* little observations to the crowd chewing the rag "for'ard of the pawl post." In spite of it all, Finnegan the optimistic smiled, and when that seraphic grin stole over his broad, kindly features,

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the gang cursed him for a "gaudy grinnin' image" and ventured the hope that some of their number would put a different expression upon the skipper's countenance.

They started on their first set off the Rocks, using the small halibut and shack gear in the dories. The halibut and cod taken in the first sets were split, flitched, and salted, and working the different depths of water they made some fair hauls. Following the fish, they worked over to Heath Point, Anticosti, and made sets all along the Island shore to West Point, until the Straits of Belle Isle cleared of ice along in the beginning of July. Up through the Straits and along the Labrador they trawled during the long Summer days. Procuring fresh bait, they swung south to the Funks Grounds to fill up on fresh stock.

If Finnegan was a poor hand at carrying sail, the crowd had to admit that he was no slouch at fishing. Though they made no extraordinarily big hauls, yet he found the fish in all the spots he strung the dories over, and by the time they made the Funks they had a good trip of flitched halibut and salt cod in the pens below.

"I really believe I'm a goin' t' git clear with a good trip at last," said Finnegan to himself. "I've had no accidents so far, an' I've struck fish. Gimme a few good sets on th' Funks, an' I'll jog her home quiet-like in spite o' Kemble's sail carryin' bazoo artists aboard here. Ef they want sail carryin', they kin have Kemble back again. Let me land a good trip an' I kin git a vessel an' a quiet crowd o' men who're content t' go fishin' 'thout tearin' full pelt atween port an' Bank. It don't pay."

They made the desired grounds and baited up their gear. In the afternoon of a pleasant July day the dories were dropped, one after the other, and the long skates of trawl were anchored over the bottom of the sea. Setting the watch buoy with a lighted lantern to the end of the gear, the men returned aboard, and during the night the vessel made short tacks, keeping the watch light in sight. At sunrise, while a light sou'wester was ruffling the calm surface of the sea, the dories were hoisted over and the gang got on their gear.

Left upon the schooner were the skipper and the cook, and the two of them had scarce shipped the checkerboards to receive the fish before the weather dory had an oar up.

"Ho! ho!" chuckled the skipper. "Loaded up an' jest started haulin'! That looks good. Draw away th' jumbo, cook, an' git your halibut gaffs an' pews ready. Timmins has his oar up——"

"Aye, skipper," cried the cook excitedly, "an' so has Jimmy Watson an' Jack Sullivan. Look! There goes another. Th' whole crowd are on fish."

Finnegan twirled the wheel over.

"Now, ef th' weather'll only hold good we may get a jag out o' this set, but th' glass is low an' that red sunrise ain't a good sign with a southerly wind. Stand by dory painter, cook!"

Down the string of dories they went. All had to be lightened of a load.

"Watch th' vessel," said Finnegan, as they departed for their gear again. "Ef it breezes up I'll want ye aboard. Buoy your trawls an' leave 'em ef ye see the ens'n in th' riggin'."

"Like fun we will," was the general comment. "Think we're a goin' t' leave loaded trawls when you begin t' git nervous? When your gaudy ens'n 's flyin' I'm blind in one eye an' can't see out the other, Old Woman Finnegan. Ef 'twas Juddy Kemble skipperin' th' *Cootchie*, he'd hev us on th' gear ontil th' blame' gulls couldn't fly to wind'ard, an' we're th' gang to stand th' racket!"

When they were gone the skipper gave the wheel a savage wrench.

"Oh, ye will, will ye?" he muttered, with the smile still on his face. "Ye'll not see the ens'n, eh? Ye'll hang out till th' gulls can't fly to wind'ard, so ye say. Ye'll leave me aboard here with full decks an' all this sail on her when it breezes up. Waal, we'll see who hangs out th' longest, me or you!"

FOUR times the dories lightened that morning. When the lee dory had left for the gear again the breeze struck in, lightly at first, but latterly in savage squalls which caused the deep-laden schooner to roll her fish-littered decks into the lee froth as the big mainsail felt the heft of the wind. The sea was beginning to rise and break in ugly, savage crests. The reckless, daredevil gang out in the frail dories chuckled to themselves and speculated on the sweat of terror their skipper would be in with the vessel taking charge of him in the breeze blowing.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Timmins, as he

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clubbed a squirming halibut into quietude. "I'd like t' use my club on th' skipper an' beat some sand into him. Look, Percy! Th' beggar's haulin' down th' jib already. Thar' goes his blame' ens'n. We don't see it, do we, Perce?"

His dorymate sniggered.

"Naw! I done left my specs aboard th' vessel, so I hev. 'Sides, I think th' skipper's only flyin' th' flag 'cause he's gittin' sich a big jag o' fish."

"A celebration like th' Fourth o' July or Dominion Day, Perce!"

And both men hauled on their trawl, and gaffed and clubbed halibut, while their dory rose and fell over a roaring hill and dale of sea, and occasional sprays slopped in.

The crowd jeered mightily among themselves when they saw the recall signal in the schooner's rigging, but the banter and chaff died away when they saw the flag hauled down again and the vessel heading up to windward. The sea was becoming ugly and the savage squalls were slicing the tops off the waves and driving the sprays athwart the water in a threatening manner. Instead of laughing, the dorymates began to squint anxiously in the direction of the schooner and regret their rash boasts. Even the most reckless and daring will forget to laugh in the face of impending death.

"Where the howlin' Tophet is that crazy galoot a goin'?" growled Timmins, dashing the spray out of his eyes. "Sinful Judas! This here sea 'ull take charge of us soon. Kin ye see him, Percy?"

Percy Wilson knocked off coiling trawl to have a squint over the roaring crests.

"He's away down to loo'ard. Somethin's th' matter. His fores'l 's down——"

"Halyards parted, I cal'late. Keep an eye on him, Percy boy—— Look out! Sufferin' catfish! We're swamped——"

A seething grayback struck the dory and piled over the low gunnel.

"Over with some o' them halibut!" yelled Timmins, seizing his gaff. "Cod-eyed Christopher! another brute like that an' my wife's a widder!"

All along the string of dories the gang were having their troubles, and several of the little craft, heavy with the weight of a ton of fish in them, were within an ace of swamping in the savage combers. The wind was coming away in squalls and driving the rain and spindrift across the tumbling waters, and the boats were performing antics to make even a fisherman's hair curl.

"Where th' flamin' Hades is th' vessel?" yelled dorymate to dorymate, and with no little trepidation they scanned the misty sea-line for the *Ayacucho*.

The schooner, however, was out of sight to all but Timmins and Wilson in the lee dory. Becoming nervous at the appearance of the weather, the men in the windward dory buoyed their remaining trawls and pulled for a Gloucester vessel lying to under foresail and jumbo near them. When they got safely aboard the American her skipper swung off and commenced picking up the rest of the *Ayacucho's* crowd, and wet, tired and viciously profane, fourteen of Finnegan's gang crowded the *Carrie Carson's* cabin and fo'c's'le and retailed the old growl about their skipper. With the unreasonableness of children, they blamed their present plight on Finnegan, and forgot to mention their disregard of the recall signal.

Timmins and his dorymate, Percy Wilson, jettisoned half a dory load of prime halibut, and, sighting the *Ayacucho* some three miles to leeward of them, promptly cut adrift from half a skate of trawl and made for the vessel under a Spanish-reefed dory sail. They spent a wild half hour swooping and plunging among the thundering, heaving surges. When they finally swung alongside, the skipper caught their painter and inquired sweetly—

"Who told ye t' come back?"

"Who told me?" sputtered Timmins. "Holy red-headed Judas! Ain't this enough t' make any one want t' come aboard?"

"Waal," drawled Finnegan ironically, "it might be for ornery trawlers what ain't brought up with Judson Kemble, but when I saw th' gulls still flyin' to wind'ard, I cal'lated thar was plenty o' time yet for you fellers to pull th' rest o' yer gear. Where's all yours? Did ye buoy it?"

"Naw!" snapped Timmins. "We cut it!"

"Huh!"

There was contempt in the skipper's voice, and it seemed to sting the mortified Timmins like a whiplash.

"Cut yer gear, did ye? Huh! Waal, git aboard with ye now. Put yer dory in th' chocks an' we'll git that fores'l on her again an' pick up th' gang. I'll promise you an' them a lively session. While you gear cuttin' artists an' Kemble's gulls-flyin'-to-wind'ard bullies were havin' yer little game with me this mornin' an' leavin' th' vessel with

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all this sail on her, *she started spewin' her calkin' in ten-fut strakes.* Turn to, now, an' splice that peak halyard; wench that fores'l up an' git busy on th' pumps. Ye've lost me nearly all th' deck o' halibut we had, an' it's home we'll go with half a trip."

With consternation on his bronzed features, Timmins stared and gasped:

"Spewin' her calkin'? Lost yer deck o' halibut? How?"

"How?" snapped Finnegan, with an ugly light in his gray eyes. "How, you infernal thickhead? D'ye think halibut kin stay in th' checkers when a vessel rolls down to her hatches in a breeze o' wind with four whole lowers on her? Why didn't ye come aboard when I bent the ens'n in th' riggin'? D'ye think me 'n' th' cook kin reef that mains'l an' shorten her down ourselves? Naw! Unfortunitly we couldn't, so we had t' keep it on her an' rack an' strain her all to pieces. Git to work, now. We'll pick up th' rest o' th' gang an' git to home afore she fills an' sinks."

IV

IT WAS as Finnegan had said. The tremendous press of sail on the heavily laden schooner had caused her to work the calking out of her underwater seams; a man could look over the side and see the oakum trailing. Timmins, Wilson and the cook winched the foresail up again, and while Finnegan swung her off preparatory to bringing her up to windward again, the three men manned the pumps. Instead of black, foul smelling bilge and gurry water, they spouted clear brine.

Plunging and rolling in the seaway, the *Ayacucho* buried her lee rail in the froth alee, with her decks like the side of a house and the luff of her huge mainsail a shiver. The wind was blowing great guns and small arms, and the rain came down in sheets.

"There's a vessel runnin' down to us, skipper!" bawled the cook, and out of the smother stormed the *Carrie Carson* with her decks piled with the *Ayacucho's* dories. As she drove past the *Ayacucho's* quarter under foresail and jumbo, a stentorian voice came across the broil of water.

"*Coocho* ahoy! Seven dories here!"

"All right," roared Finnegan. "Keep th' swine. I don't want 'em anny more!"

And as the *Carson* tore into the rain mist again, the toilers at the pumps wondered at their skipper's words.

Wilson spelled Timmins at the pump brakes, and the latter clawed his way aft.

"How about gittin' that mains'l off'n her, skip?" he shouted. "We kin heave her to an' git th' boys off th' *Carson* as soon as this eases up."

"Kin we?" answered the other with a harsh laugh. "Waal, maybe we kin, but we ain't. Th' *Coocho's* got a fair wind now an' for port she'll go, gang or no gang. Th' mains'l will stay on her ontil th' wind drags it off'n th' mast."

"You'll be makin' for S'int John's then an' hev her put on th' railway?"

"S'int John's be blowed!" replied Finnegan decisively. "Does a market for halibut exist in S'int John's? Is Clarence Dickey wantin' th' *Coocho's* trip in Newf'n'land or Nova Scotia? Naw! Th' vessel may not fetch Anchorville, but she'll fetch Canser. Canser is in Nova Scotia, an' to Canser th' *Coocho* will go——"

"Canser!" almost howled Timmins. "An' her leakin' like this! Holy trawler, skipper, you must be gone crazy! Four of us aboard here t' sail this leaky barge from th' Funks to Canser? Five or six hunder' mile? I refuse duty! By Judas, I do; an' you can't make me——"

Finnegan smiled as he hove the wheel down a spoke.

"An' you're th' guy what was doin' all th' talkin' about Jud Kemble an' his reckless, drivin' ways. You an' yer friends, th' tough mugs o' th' fleet! This afternoon called yer bluff, though, an' ye cut yer gear like a green trawler in his first breeze. Huh! Ye make me sick! I see thar's more'n me got yaller streaks when it comes to a showdown——"

"Aw, skip, be reasonable," pleaded Timmins. "You know this vessel kin never make th' trip with only four on us aboard. Wait an' git th' rest o' th' gang——"

"Naw, we won't wait," snapped Finnegan. "She's on her course for th' south'ard now. You made me lose a good deck o' fish with yer nonsense this mornin'. Ye've made a fool o' me th' whole trip, an' now I'm a goin' t' make a fool o' you. It ain't Old Woman Finnegan what's takin' charge now. It's me, Michael Finnegan, an' ef you don't like it I'll leave th' wheel here an' bash your ugly head off. I'm Irish, I am, an' when I'm nasty, I kin raise a row by

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whistlin' on th' devil to come an' fight me. Call th' cook to th' wheel here, an' I'll start in an' show you who's boss aboard th' *Coocho!*"

The cook came, and as soon as he had grasped the spokes Finnegan went for Timmins and knocked him into the lee scuppers. Timmins was powerful, and so was the skipper, and for two minutes half the *Ayacucho's* crew rolled in the yeasty boiling of scupper froth and pummeled one another. The cook, in his excitement, allowed the vessel to fall off, and the combatants were submerged in the broil of water which poured over the rail.

"Lemme go, skip!" gasped Timmins, coughing salt water, with his head jammed under a staysail sheet cleat. "I'll give in. This ain't no place to be scrappin'——"

FINNEGAN disentangled his fingers from the fisherman's throat.

"All right, bully," he growled menacingly. "You obey orders in future. Maybe your dorymate wants a lesson——"

Percy Wilson hastened to assure the skipper that he did not require instruction of any sort. As he took the wheel again, Finnegan threw his crew of three into a fit by ordering the light sails to be set.

"Eh?" gasped Wilson. "Did you say we was to give her th' stays'l?"

"That's what I said," snapped Finnegan, and in silent wonder the men busied themselves bending on the halyards and sheets. Finnegan was not smiling now, and the frightened trio, as they glanced at the skipper's hard, set face, felt awed by the glint in his eyes and the savage determination expressed in mouth and jaw. Gripping the spokes of the wheel with the knuckles showing white through the skin of his hairy brown fists, Finnegan rolled them over as the "hey-hoing" three on the lee quarter sweated the staysail sheet down.

Swash! With the weight of the wind in the staysail aloft, the *Ayacucho* careened until the rail went under and the crowd on the staysail sheet were buried to their waists in seething brine.

"For th' love o' Mike, skip, go easy!" they yelled. "Ye'll hev us over th' side."

Finnegan gave them a saturnine glance.

"Git that balloon jib on her, an' Timmins, you kin lay aloft an' git that maintops'l ready for settin'——"

The three men scrambled up the deluged deck and stared at the skipper in amazed fright.

"Not th' tops'l, skipper!" said Timmins. "You ain't a goin' t' risk th' masts an' our lives by givin' her th' tops'l?"

"Th' maintops'l, I said," rasped the other, "an' while you're about it, we'll set th' foretops'l as well. Rouse 'em up now! Ef your friend Judson Kemble c'd carry sail in a breeze, I kin do it too. Ye've bin howlin' for sail th' whole blame' trip, an' when I want to put it to her you squeal. The *Coocho's* got to sail now—sail or sink."

Muttering heartfelt oaths with every ratline he had to ascend, Timmins clawed his way aloft and cast the topsail gasket adrift.

"Set yer gaudy sail and be blowed to you!" he shouted viciously, and as the two on deck manned the halyard and out-haul, he scrambled off the spreaders as the topmast began to buck to the weight of the sail.

Through the whirling rain the *Ayacucho* stormed to the south'ard with every stitch of canvas hung and the wind blowing a howler from the southeast. Aloft, the slender topmasts bent and bucked with the weight of the wind in the topsails, and the sheets set bar-taut with the tug of the canvas. A steady roar of resisting water mingled with the whine and drone of the gale in the rigging, and rolling and plunging, the schooner drove her bows into the lifting surges and filled her decks with hissing, foam-laced brine.

The long Northern evening came with the wind breezing stronger for night. In the half light the sea looked gray and terrible to the wearied trio spelling one another at the pumps. Finnegan, still at the wheel, gave a satisfied glance aloft at the iron-hard curves of the sails, and sung out above the roar of wind and sea—

"Aft here to th' wheel, some one, while I git a mug-up!"

Wilson and the cook gave a scared look at the roaring surges which upreared their frightful crests over the low rail.

"Durned ef we'll take her!" they said, and Timmins, who was pumping, growled an oath. "Let *him* run her, blast him! He put th' sail on her; now let him drive her!"

"Aft here to the wheel, some one!" roared the skipper again, and seeing no movement on the part of the three men clustered by the mainmast, he laughed. "What's th' matter with Juddy Kemble's sail carriers?

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A durn lot of ol' women when it comes to a show down! Ha! Ha! All right, bullies, ef no one cares to relieve th' wheel, I'll slip her in th' becket an' let her take a chanst o' steerin' herself——"

"Judas! He's lashin' th' wheel!" gasped Wilson. "She'll roll over in this——"

Timmins knocked off pumping.

"Take a holt here," he growled, and running aft he grasped the spokes just as the skipper left them.

"I'll take her!" he snarled savagely. What's th' course?"

"Sou'west, an' keep a good full on her!"

"Sou'west, an' keep a good full on her!" repeated the other. As Finnegan went for'ard, he added viciously:

"An' I hope you choke yerself on yer grub. You're out to scare me, but, by the ol' red-headed Jupiter, you can't do it!"

IT IS one thing to drive a vessel under sail in a breeze during daylight, but it is quite another matter to do the same thing at night. The men fully expected that Finnegan's burst of bravado would cool off with the coming of the dark and that he would haul the light sails down, but when he came from having a mug-up in the deluged forecastle, he was smacking his lips over the reminiscent taste of lemon pie and cold coffee, and thinking of nothing but getting the *Ayacucho* across the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and into Canso in the quickest possible time.

Relieving Timmins at the wheel—and Timmins was glad to be relieved—he shouted into that worthy's ear:

"Keep a pumpin', John. Water ain't over th' fo'c's'le floor yet. I'll sail her. You 'n' Wilson spell at the pumps. Cook kin git side lights out an' keep a watch out for'ard——"

"How about sleepin' an' eatin'?" growled the other. "Hev we got t' keep up this game ontil we git into port?"

Finnegan answered shortly.

"You have, bully. When she's tied up in Canser you kin sleep an' eat all ye hev a mind to!"

And Timmins lurched for'ard to the pump brakes, spitting lurid profanities.

The darkness shut down, black and frightful with the roar of warring elements. With her lee rail awash and the breeze coming in a steady thunder from under the booms, the *Ayacucho* stormed through the night-swathed sea with an acre of white water booming away to leeward from her driving bows. Ever and anon a boiling yeast of brine would topple over the weather rail and stream across her decks. In the heavier puffs the masts would creak alarmingly and she would careen until the water spurted up to her hatch coamings, and the frightened men toiling at the pumps would hang on to windward expecting to see the masts roll over the side.

"This is a terror," remarked the cook to Timmins. "Ef we see daylight again without somethin' happenin', I'll swaller the anchor. Finnegan's gone crazy, sure."

"What d'ye say ef we turn to an' git th' sail off'n her?" suggested the other. "We kin yank th' stays'l an' balloon down without askin' him. He darsen't leave th' wheel to stop us. What d'ye say?"

The cook agreed readily. Calling Wilson away from the pump, Timmins told him of their intention.

"Stays'l first!" commanded Timmins, and the two others cast the halyards off the pins.

Bang! Flap! Bang! With the sheet still belayed, the big square of canvas filled with wind and flapped and slatted thunderously as the halyards were slacked away.

"What you doin'?" roared the skipper from the wheel.

Timmins, heaving with desperation on the tack rope, yelled to his frightened assistants, "Git on to th' sheet, for th' love o' Mike, an' haul her down——"

Cr-r-ack! Flap! Bang!

"Stand from under!" roared some one, and down from aloft thundered a slatting mass of gear.

"Holy trawler!" yelled Wilson. "Th' blame' topmasts are gone——"

"Clear away that raffle!"

It was Finnegan's voice.

"Weather up yer jumbo!"

With her two topmasts hanging to leeward and the balloon jib trailing over the lee bow; with the staysail caught over the fore gaff and a welter of halyards and wire stays foul of the rigging, the *Ayacucho* presented a shorn appearance as she rounded up to the wind.

"Durn th' crazy fools!" growled the skipper as he hove the wheel down. "They've hauled th' sail off'n her in style.

From out of the darkness for'ard a man yelled, "Bear away! Bear away, for Heaven's sake!" And while Finnegan rolled the

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wheel over from hard down to hard up, the *Ayacucho* lurched into a ghostly shape and fetched up with a sudden, jarring crash.

"Berg, by Judas!" muttered Finnegan calmly. "Here ends Finnegan's luck."

As the men came running aft, he waited for them to speak.

"She's all gone for'ard, skipper," cried Timmins. "Better git th' dory over——"

"What did she hit? Iceberg?" inquired the Captain dully.

"No!" growled Timmins hoarsely. "Thar's what she hit. Look to loo'ard."

"A vessel!"

"A derelict vessel," corrected the other.

Finnegan jumped.

"Over with th' dory, boys!" he shouted. Th' *Coocho's* no place for us now. Beat it for th derelict while th' goin's good!"

And they beat it.

V

FLAGS were flying at half mast over the Anchorville public buildings, and the groups of loafing trawlers in the fishermen's rendezvous were discussing the loss of the *Ayacucho* with sundry members of that vessel's gang who were fortunate enough to have been elsewhere when the disaster happened.

Down in Clarence Dickey's office two fishermen were giving the *Ayacucho's* owner an account of their last sight of the vessel.

"Yes, Mr. Dickey, we made our last set on th' Funks, an' it commenced breezin' up. I cal'late somethin' parted on th' vessel's gear, for she got away down to loo'ard an' couldn't pick us up, so we went aboard th' *Carrie Carson*, seven dories of us. Jack Timmins an' Percy Wilson got aboard the *Coocho* all right, for we seed them that night when we run down an' spoke her——"

"Was it blowing hard then?" queried the owner.

"Aye, 'twas breezin' some. We was down to fores'l an' jumbo on th' *Carson*, but Finnegan had th' four lowers still on her. It blowed awful hard that night."

"How d'ye think the accident happened?"

The fishermen shrugged their shoulders.

"Th' Lord knows. Must ha' hit somethin', maybe, or sprung a leak. Finnegan was a very careful man, an' he'd hev th' sail off'n her pretty quick. They're gone, anyway, an' may God be good to 'em."

Clarence Dickey turned to the bookkeeper.

"John," he said quietly, "make out three checks for fifty dollars an' one for a hundred an' send 'em to these poor men's families. Th' hundred dollars'll go to Mrs. Finnegan. 'Tis all I can do."

The days passed. Judson Kemble mourned the loss of his command for a while, and went to sea in a newer and abler vessel. The *Ayacucho* and the four men lost upon her were listed upon the Government toll credited to the fisheries, and within a month the affair was practically forgotten by all but the wives and families of those bereaved.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, came a cablegram from Queenstown, Ireland, to Clarence Dickey, which read:

Finnegan, Timmins, Wilson, McGraw safe. Inform relatives.

The yellow paper was pasted up on the office window. Crowds of fishermen and others came to view the terse intelligence and speculate on the manner of rescue.

"They've been picked up by some liner, I cal'late," was the general assumption, and men swore in their pleasure. "Might ha' known ye c'dn't drown that darned Hard-Luck Finnegan. He'll come back an' put more vessels on th' bum afore he croaks, th' ol' dog!"

Yes, they all came back, but they came back in style and not in the manner of distressed seamen. Resplendent in English-cut clothes, with tan boots, boiled shirts, collars, and loud ties draped upon their bodies, the lost quartet fell off the Anchorville train one September morning gloriously full of the juice of the barley. They hove their suit cases into Tom Hanlon's automobile and, with a crowd of wondering friends, rolled down to Dickey's office and held a levee for a hilarious hour. Being a modest man, Finnegan's account would be anything but interesting to the reader, but the narrative of Mr. John Timmins, as given to the Anchorville *Echo* editor, and clipped of some of its luridity, will enlighten.

"YES, siree, when we hit that derelict a wallop th' *Coocho* jest opened up for'ard an' started to fill, so skip an' me 'n' Wilson an' cook jest shoves that dory over th' rail an' beats it for th' nearest hold for shoe-leather—which happened to be that there derelict. When we gits

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aboard we finds out that she's a Norwegian iron bark loaded with deals, an' in one thunderin' mess. Her mizzen m'st was gone at th' deck, but th' main and fore lower m'sts were standin'. That was enough for Finnegan, an' when daylight come he turned us to riggin' up some kind o' jury sail.

" 'God has taken pity on me fur me hard luck,' says he, 'an' he's thrown this here derelict acrost my bows. We'll hang to her an' work her into a port an' collar th' salvage.'

"I was 'most coopered up with pumpin' that ol' *Coocho*, but salvage looked good to me, so I jest took a bracer on myself an' th' four of us worked like all git-out to get her straightened up. First, we rigged her fore-an'-aft fashion with stays'ls, but after we got 'em h'isted we found she wouldn't go to wind'ard w'uth a cuss. We worked her on courses for Newf'n'land an' for Cape Breton, but with th' blame' wind allus ahead she jest drifted to loo'ard like a trawl kag. We was th' best part o' three days monkeyin' with her. Then Finnegan says:

" 'Boys, this here wind's only fair for runnin' this logy barge. Rouse that squaresail up on th' forem'st, an' we'll let her run fur Yurrup!'

"Waal, sir, that kinder took th' ginger outer me. I ain't stuck on gittin' too fur off soundin's, an' arter me an' th' skipper hed a little argyment with our hands I gave my reluctant assent, and I kin tell you we worked some hard gittin' a big foreyard an' sail up on that mast. Th' wind was westerly, so we jest put her afore it, an' splashin' along like a hog in a crick, that Scowegian bark simply romped acrost th' Western Ocean.

"Thar was a power o' water in her hold, but when we put her afore th' wind we managed to keep her fairly dry. I cal'late she worked heavy in goin' to wind'ard when she had her spars and sails on her, an' leaked so much that she frightened her crowd into abandonin' her. She might ha' had a bad list, but when we got aboard o' her her deckload had broke adrift an' was 'most gone an' she was practically on an even keel.

"Waal, sir, that trip acrost th' Big Drink was a howlin' terror. It blowed a breeze o' wind from th' west'ard th' whole time, an' steerin' that iron barge 'ud make ye sweat drops o' blood. Thar was allus two of us to her wheel, an' that was th' way we worked it. Two steerin' an' two sleepin', eatin', or pumpin'. Three times me 'n' th' skipper hed a fight about keepin' it up, an' three times Finnegan trimmed me.

" 'Abandon her ye sha'n't,' says he, an' th' beggar actually cut th' dory adrift so's we couldn't leave her ef we wanted to.

"After we'd been a couple o' weeks aboard, a passin' steamer reported us by wireless, an' one mornin' a tug heaves in sight an' lugs us inter Queenstown. That's all there was to it. Th' bark was badly damaged an' with a big dent in her side whar th' *Coocho* hit her, but she kin be repaired, an' th' cargo o' deals below decks was all right.

"What did we do when we landed? Lord, mister, I can't tell ye, for I was gloriously pickled th' whole time I was in Queenstown. Them Irish are a great people for entertainin' a man.

"Yes, we're gittin' a pot o' money out o' th' business for salvagin' th' bark. The insurance people treated us pretty nice an' give us our passages home in a bloomin' mail boat. Th' skipper's cal'latin' to knock off fishin' with th' wad he's gittin', an' believe me, sir, he deserves every dollar.

"Now, sir, ye'll be puttin' all this yarn in your paper, but, for th' benefit o' a certain crowd I hev in mind, I'll ask ye to mention a little thing what has bin on my conscience. When ye're writin' about Cap Finnegan, ye'll please say that John Timmins—that's me, see—John Timmins takes off his hat to Mike Finnegan as the only skipper what ever was able to scare him in carryin' sail. Ye'll say that Mike Finnegan is th' roughest, toughest, nerviest, an' th' hardest dog of a driver what ever twirled th' wheel of a vessel. Ye kin say that he kin put Judson Kemble hull down for sail draggin', an' any man what says he has a yaller streak in him kin say it to John Timmins, an' th' said Timmins'll take pleasure in bashin' the ugly head off th' swab what says so. See? Put that in big print an' I'll pay ye for it, for I'm th' man what knows."

MICHAEL FINNEGAN, the unfortunate, had taken the tide which occurs in the affairs of men. Going out with the flood, he had made a competence, and what was just as important, he had gained for himself an undying fame among those hardy, reckless seafarers who love to defy the vagaries of the element upon which they toil.

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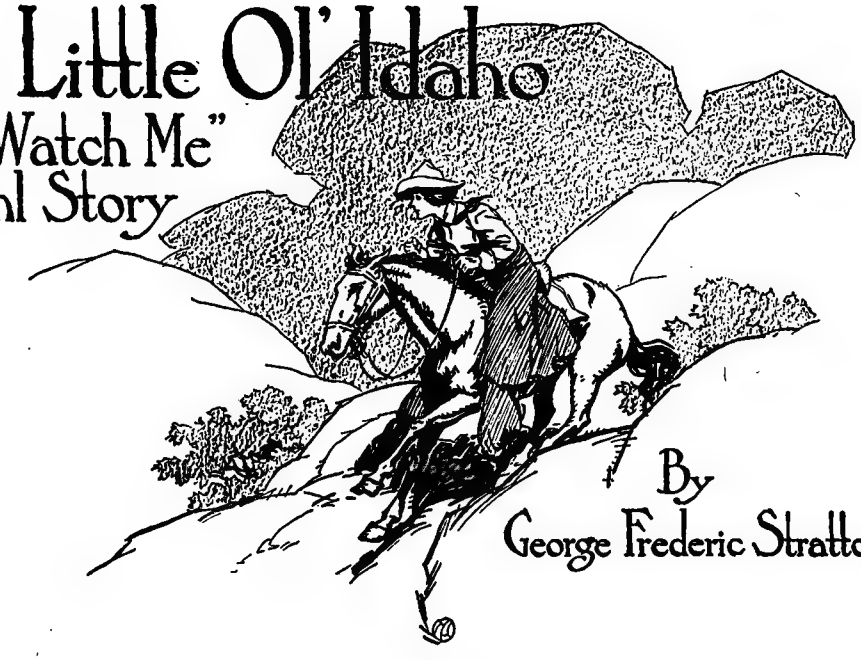
In Little Ol' Idaho

A "Watch Me" Dahl Story



By George Frederic Stratton

CHAPTER I

"BOSSES TOGETHER"

MRS. DAHL rode by her husband's side along the Tehama Trail which led into Dahlhurst. That trail was as open as when the entire valley was one great cattle range. Now, however, there were growing crops right to the road's edge, without any intervening fences, with their accompanying six or eight foot strips of weeds. The first act of Senator "Watch Me" Dahl, when he went to the Legislature, was to put through amendments providing that cattle owners should keep their stock in bounds and thus obviate the necessity for the great expense of fencing all plowed land.

He was now riding, loose-reined, his eyes flitting from alfalfa to wheat; from sugar beets to peach trees, and comparing the garden with the sagebrush desert of six years before. Suddenly his wife, her eyes bewitchingly twinkling, began to quote:

"Behold the Boss! A silent, watchful man,
Whose baleful eye is on the Common People;
Sphinx-like he sits compounding plot and plan,
Never proclaimed from housetop or from steeple."

"I didn't know that your election would make you a boss, Senator! I'm going to start a suffragette movement, prompt an' immediate. We women of the Tehama Valley are not going to stand for bossism and its trimmings!"

Her husband turned with a beaming smile in his steady frank eyes and followed up the quotation:

"The splendid mem'ries of the past may thrill
Some dreamer's heart who reads his country's story;
But men of sense know well we can not fill
An empty stomach with a tale of glory."

"Oh, Dolly!" she interrupted. "Look! Buddy Jensen's in trouble. What——"

But Dahl's horse was tearing across a stretch of desert. The boy's broncho was on a mad stampede toward the north where opened the treacherous and deadly Toltec Gorge, strewn in its bed-rocks with the bleached bones of scores of stampeded cattle. The little eight-year-old fellow was riding manfully, but his control was gone. Dahl's furious dash carried him to a point where he rounded the pony and headed it from its direct rush to destruction, but it still tore madly on, following the deadly ravine.

Then his wife cut in. Her quirt came

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smartly on to her horse's haunches and his responding plunge settled instantly into the long-reaching stride which justified her encomiums on his speed. It was a race, short but furious, and the danger of the Gulch being averted, Dahl loped along behind easily, his eyes gleaming with admiration at the horsemanship of his wife. He wished the race might last for ten miles as he gazed at the erect little khaki-clad figure, the squarely set shoulders, the picturesque sombrero that sat so jauntily on the well poised head, and the quirt daintily flicking the horse's flanks to bring his stride to its best.

Twice the broncho swerved as she came alongside, but she wheeled her horse as sharply. The next moment her figure bent down over one side of her horse's neck and her hand grasped the runaway's reins. A half minute of sharp masterly struggle while Dahl came up within helping distance, and the pony was subdued.

"TALK about bossism!" gleamed her husband. "You could give points, all right!"

"You're a sure good fellow to let me fight it out alone," she responded.

"And yet you've been talking about a suffragette movement to butt in on my fights," he grinned. "Anyway, if you did form such an organization, you'd be Boss, sure! So why can't we work together as bosses now?"

A roguish gleam came into her eyes as she rippled:

"Hmp! Is there any particular horse you're wantin' roped for this round-up, Mister?"

"Sure! I want a nice little frame-up with sugar on top to hand to the Gem State Power and Irrigation Company."

"So! And what particular brand of tears are *they* causing you to sprinkle over the landscape, Senator 'Watch Me'? "

There were a grim pressure of his lips and sharp corrugations of perplexity in his forehead as he replied:

"It isn't tears, Elna; it's a puzzle. The tightest puzzle I've run up against since I've been in the Legislature."

"Sounds 'bully'—to quote dear Teddy," she laughed. "Give me the pieces."

"That Company secured a charter some time ago to develop a big electric power plant up in the Toltec Gorge; and although they're grabbing every irrigation prospect in the State, they did not include irrigation development in that charter. That's half the mystery. There's water enough coming down there for twenty thousand acres and yet they're letting it pass! Still as puzzling is the fact that, although a new company—our people here in the valley, ranchers and so on—has applied for a charter to improve a big tract with that water, the Gem State Company is showing no opposition."

"If they don't want it, they don't care who takes it, of course," smiled his wife; but there was no answering smile in Dahl's eyes, which were fixed upon the trail they were riding; but which saw nothing.

Presently he muttered:

"That Company has the strongest organization of any Company in this State—or in the whole Intermountain region. I'll bet that half of the Legislature owns stock in it; and they can, and do, do just about as they please. There's something under it all, Elna. They'll never let any one have that water but themselves!

"There were but few men through here big enough to form an irrigation company until recently, and they didn't care about it. Cattle on open range was all they cared for; and yet, although the Gem State Company knows well the coming tremendous value of it all, it makes no effort to secure it."

"Looks like a very dark horse, somewhere!" mused his wife.

"It's all 'dark horse' with that Company, Elna. They couldn't run straight if they were fired from a gun! They've bribed for every charter they ever got, even if it was for some project every one wanted 'em to develop. It's a chronic habit!"

"When does the new company's petition for an irrigating charter come up, Dolly?"

"At this next session. And although I look for a big fight with the Gem State folks, there's not the slightest indication that they're going to oppose. Not the first gleam of it! It's incredible! There's a coyote in the patch, somewhere."

"And you want me to locate that coyote? Eh, Dolly?"

"I wish you could. You've made suggestions before that went right down to pay streak; but this streak's in a pretty low level."

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"What is there in it for me?" she demanded, her eyes mischievously twinkling.

He grinned.

"No bribery or corruption in this organization! Passing money between bosses isn't honest policy."

"I'm not thinking of money," she laughed. "I want another horse."

"Another horse! What's the matter with Smooch?"

"That's my affair. I'll tell you when I locate that coyote."

"Do that!" he gleamed, with intense ardor, "and you shall have the best horse that can be found in the whole valley—if it's for sale!"

"That goes!" she laughed. "Here's where I put on my cooking-apron and mix a nice little frame-up, with sugar on top, for the dear little Gem State Power and Irrigation Company."

CHAPTER II

DORA ROSTLER PLANS A VISIT

MRS. DAHL rode up to one of the cottages in Dahlhurst leading another horse, saddled. She did not stop until Smooch's forefeet were against the step of the veranda. Then she called:

"Come on, Dora! I'm going over to the Toltec Gorge, and I've brought a horse for you."

"You darling!" exclaimed the girl on the veranda. "I'm wild for a ride! I'll get into my dress in a moment."

Mrs. Dahl leaped to the ground, flung both reins over the horses' heads and seated herself on the upper step, at the feet of a gray-haired woman, whose bronzed face, seamed with innumerable wrinkles, proclaimed a life spent on the range.

"My dear!" she said, her still fine eyes glistening with tearful admiration. "You are so good to Dora! She rode so much with her father before he died, and she misses her horse sadly; but you know we have to be careful on expense. The rental of our ranch gives us enough to live upon, but not enough to keep horses."

"Dora's always welcome to one of ours," beamed Mrs. Dahl. "She's some company on a ride, I tell you! That's when we hatch our suffragette plots."

Mrs. Rostler laughed merrily.

"Plots to burn the Dahlhurst depot, I suppose, and destroy your neighbor's mail; just as those English women are doing."

Scorn came into little Mrs. Dahl's eyes.

"We use brains instead of bad temper. All ready, Dora?"

"I'm glad we're going over to the Gorge!" exclaimed the girl as they cantered away. "I love to look at that splendid water that's going to turn our old ranch into real farms. Do you think they'll put that irrigation bill through this session, Elna?"

Elna's pretty lips pressed into a thin, stern line, and her eyelids drooped frowningly; but beneath them the half hidden eyes twinkled.

"You're thinking a good deal about that irrigation, Dora. Building a whole lot on it!"

"I should surmise! We could get double the rental for the ranch then, or sell at a splendid figure. Your father says so—he advised us not to sell now—and he knows."

"No man knows!" said Elna, gloomily. "No man ever knows what other men are plotting. Dora! I don't want to make you feel blue, but there's something wrong. There sure is!"

"Something wrong? Tell me, Elna! Tell me! It means so much to us. I want a horse, and mother wants a good buggy; and we both want money enough to make some trips away, once in a while. Mother hasn't been out of this valley for over twenty years. Even I—" and her voice shrank to a shamed whisper—"I have never been further than Cheyenne—not even to Denver!"

Elna's eyes filled with sympathy, but no gleam of her determination disappeared.

"You ought to have the things you want, Dora, and get out more; and you will later, of course. But—— Well, I ought to warn you. You'll have some delay, I'm afraid."

"Delay, Elna? Tell me quick. You don't mean much delay?"

"There's a puzzle ahead," murmured Mrs. Dahl.

Then she told of her husband's perplexity about the Gem State Company.

"Dolly—er—I mean, Philip," she concluded, "is in close touch with the big men of the State, and they all agree that the grasping Company intends in some way to head off our irrigation scheme. They've got big new irrigation projects of their own, and perhaps they want to sell them off before any competing project comes in."

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A LITTLE mistiness came into Dora's eyes. Then they flashed scornfully:

"That's the way it is with men! With their statecraft and their diplomacy, always playing stacked hands against each other!"

"That's a cinch," agreed Elna. "And that's where our suffragette idea comes in. Woman's influence can beat man's craft, every time!"

"Show me!" exclaimed Dora.

"Missouri in the Tehama Valley!" laughed Elna. "Now! Do you remember your vacation trip to your aunt at Pocatello last Summer?"

"Do I!" flamed the girl. "You can bet your pony and throw the saddle in."

"Likewise an' also, do you remember a certain Mr. Daniel Twisden, who, I've heard, paid you a good deal of attention there?"

"Likewise an' also, I do," laughed Dora.

"Here's where the suffragette policy gets in its little ol' work," bubbled Elna. "You must go on another vacation trip to Pocatello at once; rehash your flirtation with Danny, and rope in the secrets of the Gem State Power and Irrigation Company!"

"It wasn't a flirtation. I don't like him. Besides, what does he know about that Company?"

"He's their Chief Engineer, Dora. Their little ol' Chief Engineer!"

"And what of that? He only follows orders. He told me so himself."

"Got as far as that, did you?" taunted Elna. "But he didn't tell you how big he is—the Chief Engineer, not a little transit man. He's one of the men who have to be consulted when they're plotting prospects. That's sure! And, if you handle him right, you can get at least a hint of what's on their little ol' minds about the Toltec Gorge."

"Don't know about that. He doesn't rattle along with all he knows—and more, like some of these friv'lous young ranchers and store clerks."

"Every man's alike, Dora; only you've got to handle them differently—like steers—according to the particular way they run or buck. Now! Seize the right opportunity—one of them—and purse down the corners of your pretty little mouth, and droop your pretty little eyelids, and remark that you are perplexed, and look perplexed. Tell him that your mother's had an offer—a good offer—for the ranch; and, in your and your mother's helpless and innocent inexperience in business, you don't know whether to take it, although you need the money, oh! so much."

"Well, he'll advise us to, I reckon. What will that reveal?"

"Follow it up! Moan that you've heard that the new Toltec Gorge Irrigation Company is going to get a charter; and that if they irrigate your land it will double or treble its value. Then moan some more, and look helpless and forlorn; and murmur that although it's very hard to wait, it would be much harder to sell now and lose the increase. Savvy?"

"I savvy, all right," gleamed Dora. "It's a cinch."

Then her brows puckered a little and her eyes shaded with trouble:

"But I can't do it, Elna. Not now. That trip costs about fifty dollars, and I had to save for a year to ante up the last time. Now I haven't got a dollar ahead."

"Here's where we suffragettes work together," laughed Elna.

She pulled a wallet from her bosom and extracted five ten-dollar bills.

"There! That covers that!"

"Oh; I can not," demurred Dora. "I can not let you pay my expenses."

"It's the organization," grinned Mrs. Dahl. "Our suffragette organization; the wickedest, most unprincipled, most secret and most corrupt organization that little ol' Idaho has ever been ridden by."

She pushed the bills into Dora's hand and added:

"That isn't all the wicked bribery! Do you know that beautiful little mare of Curley Jensen's—the best horseman in the Tehama Valley; the man who can break a horse without breaking him?"

"Do I know the little beauty!" almost moaned Dora. "I've laid awake nights thinking of her, and longing for her."

"Well! When you bring back the information of what that Company's intending to do in the Toltec Gorge, that mare is yours, Dora! I keep my word, always. Don't I?"

"I'll have her!" gasped the girl. "I'll sure have her. I'll go to Pocatello to-morrow—no; the next day!"

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CHAPTER III

"WE" GET STARTED

SENATOR DAHL had been over to Boisé consulting with a few of the big men of the organization, of which he was the acknowledged leader, regarding the approaching session of the Legislature. After his usual beaming reception by his wife, he asked:

"How about that sugar-coated frame-up for the Gem State Company, little wife—er—beg pardon, Boss Suffragette? Got it browned yet?"

" 'Tisn't mixed yet," she laughed. "I'm shy on some of the ingredients. It's different from meandering down to the Dahlhurst Stupendous Department Stores and buying a pound of this and a cup of that, and a yard of something else, and a pinch of salt. But we've got started."

"We? Who's the 'we'?"

"The suffragette association. You don't expect to pry into our membership, do you, sir?"

"Don't care, as long as I stand in with the Boss-ee."

Then the smile faded from his face and his brows furrowed deeply.

"How far have you got, Elna?"

"We have heard this from one of the Company's officials, Dolly: That-no-water-will-ever-come-down-the-Toltec-Gorge-for-irrigation!"

The furrows deepened, and his eyes fastened upon her with such intense inquiry that she went on:

"Dora Rostler went over to Pocatello for a visit, and Mr. Daniel Twisden, who pretended before to be a little bit sweet on her, followed it up, and she got that positive information from him."

"Daniel Twisden! Their Chief Engineer!"

Dahl emitted a long-drawn-out whistle, commencing high up in the scale and descending to the lowest note of which he was capable.

"Impossible!"

"Impossible?" retorted his wife with smiling scorn. "What is impossible to a suffragette? Dora told him that they had had a good offer for their ranch, but hesitated about taking it, because they understood that it would soon come under the new irrigation project. Then he said: 'My dear Miss Rostler, let me advise you to take that offer *if it is a good one.* I ought not to say one word about what I know, but my respect for you—my—er—deeper feelings—compel me to tell you. That is, that no-water-will-ever-come-down-the-Toltec-Gorge-for-irrigation!' "

The Senator stared at her blankly. After some moments he muttered:

"I suppose a girl—a girl like Dora—can turn any man's head; but I thought that Twisden was immune, or inoculated, or whatever it is. He's absolutely loyal to his Company, and never gives one gleam or hint of any plan or purpose, however simple. She must have hypnotized him!"

"Boo, Senator Dolly! It wasn't hypnotism; it was suffragettism, with a little sauce *à la* flirtation; but, of course, it beats anything that any of you deep-seeing, astute, heavy-browed statesmen could do. But what's it amount to, anyway?"

"It crystallizes what we suspected, Elna; but of course it is no indication of how they're going to stop that water. They'll build their power house near the foot of the Gulch, no doubt; and when the water has run through their wheels, it's got to go somewhere. It must! It isn't possible for them to divert it. It must and will find its way into the centuries-old Toltec Gorge, and that's where the new irrigation company will dam it and turn it on to the land!"

HIS wife perched on the arm of his big porch chair, swinging her feet rhythmically, while appealing little puckers came into the corners of her mouth and between her eyes.

"You've got me roped in on the puzzle part just now, Dolly! You sure have! But I've heard you say that nothing's impossible to modern engineers."

"That's pretty nearly right, Elna. But many things they could make possible are impracticable because of the cost, and the future profit."

She laughed. "That's what old Stonycreek said of you when you came in here, and started Dahlhurst by putting a wagon-load of swagger merchandise into the old ore bin; and not a house within a mile! They laughed at you and sneered at you; yet now, now in six short years, it's the County Seat, with a railroad and a bank and four thousand inhabitants. What does 'impossible' mean, anyhow?"

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"The Gem State fellows are some men, it is true!" he muttered. "The keenest, shrewdest and most unprincipled bunch that these old United States ever were ridden by. I'm not doubting that they're going to do something; but what? Say, Elna! Did anything come of that—er—suffragette flirtation? Did Twisden really propose to her?"

"No. I reckon Dora gushed too much. She can make eyes awfully, you know. I expect that Mr. Daniel Twisden was impressed that she was clean gone on him; and he pitied her, and gave her what comfort he could, and all he intended to—his advice."

"And, Dora?" persisted the Senator, his fine eyes filled with sympathy. "You are quite sure that she isn't—isn't hurt at all?"

A peal of ringing laughter broke from his wife; gurgling and rippling in repetition.

"Oh-h, Dolly! You ought to have heard her tell it all. If you'd been on a horse you'd have rolled off, and then rolled over the landscape, playing the hysterical Senator! She's a star! She's the whole constellation! Why, you dear little ol' ranch Senator, she's a suffragette! How dare you think that any man could hurt her?"

"I dare deny nothing that you assert," he grinned. Then with a sudden narrowing of his eyes together, and a ring of suspicion in his voice, he demanded—

"Did Twisden make any suggestion that his Company, or any one he knew, might buy the Rostler ranch?"

"Nary a suggest, Dolly."

"There it is again! If they had the slightest purpose in their minds of eventually handling that irrigation themselves, they would be scooping up every acre of the adjoining land—and doing it now. That's how they've made their wealth; buying ranch and desert land at a few dollars per acre, and selling it, irrigated, at one to two hundred."

"Well," beamed Mrs. Dahl, "Mr. Daniel Twisden made no such suggestion; he didn't even ask the price."

Then, with a musical little giggle, she added—

"Dora's expenses to Pocatello were fifty dollars, Senator, and I guaranteed them."

Dahl gasped. "Do you mean that she went to Pocatello for that very purpose, Elna? To pump Twisden?"

"Precisely and exactly, most potent, grave and wise legislator. Ante up!"

He laughed uproariously and handed her some bills, chuckling—

"You're growing, you suffragettes; but it isn't so much as a good horse would cost."

"We're going to have the horse!" she retorted. "We'll win it. I'm going over presently to Curly Jensen's and pay him this fifty dollars as deposit on that sorrel mare."

"That mare!" exclaimed Dahl. "Why, he wants three hundred and fifty for her!"

"He'll get it," responded Elna. "It's the best mare in the valley, and that's the agreed price of our frame-up, you remember. And the frame-up's cooking. It's beginning to brown on top!"

CHAPTER IV

IN THE CAÑON

WITH rifle slung across his back and a newly stripped deerskin, containing the choicest parts of the carcass, slung over the rifle, Duckhead Sternitt came up on to the small plateau with a stride but little less energetic than that when he started six hours before on a chuck hunt.

The sun had gone down behind the Red Warrior Mountain, whose snow-capped peaks were greeting the western rays with myriads of scintillating ruby points. On the plateau the black shadows of that hoary old antediluvian, and its neighbors, blotted out all details except to the man who knew them by night as well as by day.

"Bransford not back yet!" he muttered as he dropped his pack to the ground. He chopped a handful of slivers, made a fire and set a kettle of water on the fire rocks. He washed, cut steaks from the deer and got the chuck prepared; for although prospector by profession, it was his day on camp work, which included hunting for meat.

Sprawling on a bunch of ground-cedar, he smoked and waited for his partner. The cañon shadows quickly grew deeper and extended farther. The Toltec Gorge before him became a black gash in the grayish, somber mountains. The scrub cedars and oaks lost their individuality and, swaying in the light breeze, took on suggestively fantastic forms.

As the last gleam of sunlight faded away from the Red Warrior peaks, Sternitt cast a longing glance at the pot of coffee simmering on the fire rock.

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"'Tain't like him to scuffle back as late as this," he muttered. ". . . . . Over country as rough as Nevada Bad Lands. Reckon he's struck somethin'."

His impatience, and perhaps anxiety, increased. Suddenly he drew his revolver and pointed the muzzle into the air; but he did not fire. He checked himself with a grunt:

"H'm! If he's within shot-hearin' an' wants help I'd get his signal. He ain't lookin' for mine."

Then he fried his steak, drank his coffee, and, building up the fire, again threw himself before it, filling and refilling his pipe, while the heavy corrugations on his brow knotted and tangled still more. Presently his revolver came out again, and three shots roused scores of echoes from the surrounding mountains.

Ping!——Ping-Ping!

That was their agreed-on signal; but his ears, strained to acute detection, caught no response.

Half an hour later he fired again. So on through the night. He shrugged off any impulse to search, for trailing a man on the bare rocky slopes and cañons of the Tehama Range is almost impossible in good light. At night it is folly.

So his night passed, with the flames of the camp-fire casting welcoming gleams of cheery light upon the nearby walls of the stupendous mountains; with the sharp *ping! ——ping-ping!* of his signal shots breaking the solemn silence at intervals; and with the man himself, silhouetted against a great limestone boulder which reflected back the firelight, waiting and watching with more trouble and doubt in his eyes than he had ever before shown in watching and waiting for his partner.

Before the first tinge of a sun-ray had gleamed up the long eastern stretch of the Toltec Gorge, Sternitt had breakfasted, packed some food, and started on the search. There was no consideration about the direction he should take. At first there was no search for trail signs, for their prospecting had been, for several weeks, confined to the eastern slopes of the great Red Warrior Mountain, within a couple of miles of their camp.

As he worked up into a small cross cañon which he and his partner had started on, two days before, he fired his signal at intervals, eagerly trying to distinguish from the sharp and almost instant echoes an answering call. Suddenly at a point where the cañon spread out to a small flat bench he heard the answer, but so muffled and indistinct that he could not locate it.

AS HE gazed around, bewilderedly he saw, within a few yards, a slight flurry of smoke rising from a clump of ground-cedar. A half dozen strides, and a kick revealed a small crevasse in the great rock platform; and as he peered down into impenetrable blackness his shout brought an instant response:

"Hey, Duckhead! That you?"

"Sure thing! What're you doin' down there?"

"Waitin' fer you. Fell in here last night, an' th' night lasted a week—or more! No chuck an' on'y one smoke. Got any grub with yer, Duckhead?"

"Sure have! I s'pose you can see *me*, but you might as well be over in Nevada, 'ceptin' for yer voice. Ain't hurt, are yer?"

"Nary a hurt, 'ceptin' like I'd bin kicked fer an hour by a durned burro. I'll strike a match, so 't you kin toss th' grub down without hittin' th' water."

In the faint light of the match Sternitt saw the position of his partner, twenty feet below, and to one side of a rushing torrent. He tossed in the package and exclaimed:

"Guess you'll have to have a rope, Jeff! I'll get back to camp for it."

"Yer on! An' bring a lantern, Duckhead. There's maybe things down here worth prospectin!"

Inside of an hour Sternitt was back. He made one end of his rope fast to a sturdy cottonwood, lowered the lantern and then shinned down himself; and although the men had been partners, camping and prospecting together for a dozen years, there was no sentiment displayed at their reunion. Every iota of their shrewd, keen knowledge of rocks and ores, above and below surface, was concentrated on the cavern.

It was, of course, irregular in shape; and one glance at the jagged, rocky, dome-shaped roof, in the center of which was the small crevasse through which they had come, showed Sternitt the impossibility of any man climbing out without help.

Coming from a black tunnel at one end was a raging torrent of water which rushed away into a black tunnel at the other side.

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They flashed the lantern over the rocky walls, keenly scrutinizing every foot, and chipping here and there with Bransford's prospecting hatchet.

"No pay dirt," he exclaimed. "It's all clear sandstone without a prospect."

"Good water," grunted Sternitt as he rose from his belly after a long drink. "No alkali there."

As he spoke the dangling rope jerked upward in one six-foot jump. Sternitt sprang for it but it was again jerked out of his reach, and as he yelled and glanced up, he saw a hand over the crevasse hauling up that rope. The man was out of sight.

He yelled again:

"Hey there! Let that rope down. We're coming out."

There was no response, except the final disappearance of the rope. They heard a slight trampling of feet among the ground-cedar, but no answer came to their vehement yells with Western embellishments.

They gave it up after ten minutes and discussed the cause.

"We've no enemies," grunted Bransford, "an' no man 'ud play that trick just to steal a rope."

CHAPTER V

DUCKHEAD GOES SLEUTHING

HOURS passed. They extinguished the lantern in order to have a reserve of light later. Daylight at the crevice faded out and night came down—and passed—and the two men were plunged into the gloomiest despair.

When the next day's sun was high enough to throw light down into the dark cañon, Sternitt went close to the torrent outlet and, lying flat on the rocks, strained over and peered through the tunnel. After some moments he exclaimed:

"There's a dot of light at the far end! I dunno how far, though. Any idee, Jeff, where this torrent runs out?"

"Let's see. What's the direction, Duckhead?"

"Pretty straight west, I reckon."

"That would take it clear through Red Warrior. Yes, I know 'bout where it comes out. There's a little gulch 'bout on this level, an' a torrent comes out of the Mountain into that gulch."

"Much rocky?" asked Sternitt eagerly.

"It makes a fall of 'bout fifty feet," replied Bransford reminiscently. "There's a fairly big pool it drops into; don't know's there's much rock in the pool—never took much notice; only there once. Say, Duckhead! Ye ain't figgerin' on goin' through, are ye?"

"Just what I am!" retorted the young man.

"It's sure death!" gasped Bransford. "If you ain't cut to pieces in that 'ere tunnel with its jagged sides you'll be all broke up in that fall—fifty feet, my boy!"

"What's that to starvin' to death in this dungeon?" retorted Sternitt. "We've been in camp 'bout here for six weeks an' never seen a sign of a man till that cussed hand showed up there! How long 'll we have to wait fer help?"

Bransford, speechless, buried his head in his hands. Sternitt took off his neckerchief, turned up the collar of his stout leather coat and tied the kerchief around it. Then he buttoned the coat securely, turned to his partner and held out his hand.

"If I git through, ol' man, I'll be up there—" pointing to the crevice—"in a couple of hours. If I don't git through—it's good-by!"

"I'm an old man an' can't swim or I'd go with yer," murmured Bransford. "If yer don't git through I've got this!" and he touched his revolver significantly.

"Don't yer hurry 'bout that, ol' man. While there's life there's hope! We've been up ag'in' some pretty hopeless-lookin' stunts afore, ye'll remember, an' hev allers pulled through, all right. Don't give up too quick!"

The young fellow laid himself down on his back by the side of the torrent. Then, with a sudden quick roll he was in the water, back up, head forward, and in a flash had disappeared from his companion's sight.

Although he was a powerful swimmer his entire strength and agility were required to guard himself from the cutting, grinding contact with the walls. Time and the deathly outlet ahead were blotted out in the hazard of the tunnel trip. Suddenly the opening loomed up, large and fearfully close. With a gasp of terror he grasped at a rock point; his legs doubled under him and he was torn from his hold. The next moment he plunged, feet foremost, through the opening.

He shot clear from the falls at first, so

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forceful was his discharge, but before reaching the pool dropped into them again. There, rolled over and over like a pith-ball, he struggled with the litheness and strength of a lioness, until he was caught in a whirlpool and carried away. Twice around the pool he went, choking, blinded, and hopeless.

Then his foot caught in a side root and he was whipped against the bank. He clutched frantically at some brush. After a few gasps for breath he struggled his shoulders out of the water and hung for minutes, clinging desperately to a small tree. Then he wriggled clear out and lay on the ground, gasping and fainting.

It was ten minutes, perhaps, before he regained enough energy to struggle to his feet. Even then, after a dozen trembling steps, he sank down against a rock and looked around. Below him ran off the steep, bare rock slope of the mountain. On one side the torrent was tearing down a small gulch and beyond were the tops of great pines on a level with himself, showing a deep cañon.

ANOTHER ten minutes found him scrambling into that cañon and up its bed to the divide. With Bransford in his mind he fought his way manfully, reached the divide and scrambled on, down the eastern side of the Mountain. In less than two hours he had reached camp, secured another rope, and regained the crevice where his big, exuberant shout reached the lonely, despairing man below.

When Bransford had been hauled out they squatted on the plateau and devoured the hunks of bread and bacon which Sternitt had not forgotten to grab up at the camp. Then, with pipes lighted, they talked it all over.

"It wasn't the rope he was after," growled Sternitt. "Look at that!"

He pointed to the end of the rope still fastened around the cottonwood. It was cut.

"Wouldn't have left six foot of it if he was so bad off fer rope," he added.

"That's so!" agreed the older man. "Now what was his idee, I wonder?"

Instead of reply Sternitt leaped to his feet, and to the rope, where he picked from the ground a ring. It was of gold with a curious emblem — a lizard — wriggling around it; and caught in that emblem were a few tiny fibers of the hemp.

"He left his card!" grinned Sternitt, as he handed the ring to his partner. "He sure did—an' although it don't give no address I'll find him if it takes five years! An' when I do——"

The fierce flash of his dark brown eyes finished the sentence. They went back to camp still theorizing and speculating.

Bransford observed:

"There's a gang at work at the mouth of the Seven Troughs Cañon—the one you got pretty nigh thrown into. They're building a dam an' power house fer the Gem State Company."

"Building 'em everywhere, ain't they?" grunted Sternitt.

"Mighty nigh! They're goin' ter build one next in this yere Toltec Gorge. Say! 'Mongst them gangs there's allers frivolous skunks. Ain't ever got into any peevishness with any of 'em, have yer, Duckhead?"

"Not as I recollect."

"Ain't never had no unpleasantness with any feller 'bout some girl, eh?" grinned Bransford.

"It's possible," shrugged the younger man, his eyes lighting up with some memory.

Then his jaws snapped together with fierce determination.

"I'll go across there an' look 'em over!" he growled. "Ain't had no trouble in this part of ol' Idaho, but them fellers meander about 's much as me an' you."

They had their dinner. Then Sternitt made up a small pack and, assuring his partner he'd be back as soon as he had made sure the man he was after was not with the Seven Troughs gang, he trudged off up the slopes of the Red Warrior Mountain.

Before night he reached the construction camp and got a job with the lumpers. Sprawling around the bunkhouse that evening with the other men, Sternitt made himself agreeable, and keenly scrutinized every man. By the following night he was sure that he had never met one of them before, and during that evening he remarked:

"S'pose none of you fellows get over the divide, much? Found a ring comin' over from Dahlhurst, t'other day. Ever seen it?"

It passed from hand to hand. One of the men laughed:

"It's Caller Bigby's, fer sure! I'd know that lizard if I saw it in Arizona."

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"It sure is!" echoed several men promptly.

"It's loose on his finger and he's all the time losin' it," volunteered somebody else.

"Who's Caller Bigby?" drawled Sternitt carelessly.

"He's a picayune kid th't works fer the Company," sneered the first speaker. "Brings mail an' orders up here once a week, an' slops 'roun' on any sort of job th' rest of th' time. Don't see what he was doin' over th' divide."

Sternitt filled his pipe and lit it. Then he asked—

"What day d'yer say he brings the mail?"

"To-morrow. That's his day."

Sternitt grinned. " 'Spectin' a letter from my girl 'bout now. Plumb anxious 'bout it, too! What time does he get here?"

Grins and jeers were on all faces as one of the men replied:

"Gets here at noon, always! Caller doesn't run any risk of second table in this camp. He comes over from Stonycreek on a burro."

Then followed a score of jeering questions about the girl, to which Sternitt gave descriptions and eulogisms which were uproariously received. Curiously, although he had been in the camp nearly thirty hours, he had not yet been nicknamed; but now, as one man expressed his opinion that Sternitt was "stringing 'em" he was immediately and unanimously dubbed "Stringer Snit."

CHAPTER VI

THE "SPECIAL MAN"

THE next morning he went to work with the gang; but about ten o'clock he sneaked into the brush and disappeared. He struck over the rough foothills for a couple of miles and then, hidden behind a boulder, he watched the trail from Stonycreek. Before long he saw in the distance a solitary rider; and in another half hour he stepped out on to the trail and walked toward that rider. As they came together he greeted:

"How are ye, stranger? Goin' up to th' camp?"

The man, undersized, but with a cruel sneering mouth and shifty eyes, grunted:

"Yes; I am! Where're you from?"

"Been workin' there. Came over the divide two or three days ago, an' now I've got to go down to Stonycreek ter get some clothes. Say, stranger! I found a ring up on Red Warrior an' the boys at the camp say it's yours. Lost one?"

The man shrank back and a look of terror flashed over his face, followed by a dull cunning gleam as he replied:

" 'Tain't mine! I never saw it before!"

But as his eyes raised from the ring they looked into the muzzle of an unquivering revolver, and he got the sharp unmistakable order, "Hands up!"

His hands went up. In a trembling voice he cried:

"Don't shoot, mister! I ain't got anything but the mail an' there's never any valuables in that!"

Sternitt walked to the burro's side. With his eyes fixed on the man's, and his revolver pointed at the other's chest, he clapped his hand to the fellow's side pocket, pulled out a gun and tossed it on the ground.

"Get off that burro!" he commanded.

The man obeyed. Sternitt threw the reins over a stubby cedar stump and again commanded—

"Sit down there!"

Then he pulled out his watch.

"You've got just five minutes to live," he said in clear, slow, determinate tones. "Only five! an' you'd better square yourself by a truthful confession. Why'd you pull that rope out of that crevice on the Red Warrior Mountain?"

The man's face was colorless and his teeth chattered as he gasped back:

"Me! I was never on the Red Warrior Mountain in my life. Honest!"

A shot rang out from Sternitt's revolver and the bullet splintered the rock two feet from the man's head. With a scream of terror he plunged forward on his knees.

"Don't shoot! Don't! I'll tell it all. I will! I will!"

"And you'll tell it truthful, too, or the next shot won't hit that rock! Now then, go on! Time's pullin' along!"

"Have mercy on me, mister! I couldn't help it, an' I didn't mean no harm; honest I didn't! I only wanted to teach those men not to go pryin' over the Company's property."

"They pay you for that, I suppose!" sneered Sternitt.

"I—I'm a special man, mister, an' an honest one, too; but I'm in bad luck. They ordered me to keep a watch for men on that Mountain, an' thereabouts."

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"What for? It's all Government land. Your Company doesn't own a rod of it. Go on!" And again his gun oscillated before the terrified eyes.

"No, no! I'll tell it all, every bit! They own that water in there, an' they don't want any one to know it's there, at present!"

"Why?" exploded Sternitt. "You tell me why, exact!"

"I will! I will, sure! They're goin' to turn the Toltec Gorge water in there! I heard the engineer talkin' to old Snowcraft about that. That's the truth. Honest!"

Sternitt sprang to his feet.

"Do you mean to tell me," he shouted with intense fierceness, "that you left two men down in that cavern to starve to death, to die in that fearful place just to shut off any knowledge of that water, to make plumb sure that they couldn't tell any one about it?"

THE man was groveling on his belly now, his open hands shakingly stretched before him.

"Spare me!" he screamed. "I meant no harm to them. I knew they could get out. Don't shoot! For Heaven's sake, don't shoot! I ain't ready yet!"

"How could they get out?" demanded Sternitt hoarsely.

"They could climb out. They did, didn't they?"

"One — of — them — went — through — the—tunnel. That was myself. You know there was no other way."

The man's terror gave way to a glare of amazement.

"Went—through—that—tunnel? Down —that—raging—torrent? You!"

"Yes, me! Now, listen! You're a liar an' that's the least of your dirty little villainies. Likewise an' also you're too much of a cowardly whelp for me to soil a bullet in. Get on your burro an' take your mail. But mark this, an' mark it well! If you spit out one word of havin' met me, one word of havin' told me, I'll git you! There's nothin' under heaven 'll stop me, then!"

Without casting another look at the groveling wretch, he plunged into a small cañon and made his way up to the divide, and so to his camp, where his partner received him with surprised welcome.

"Got back soon," he gleamed.

"Got him, too," retorted Sternitt.

"Finish him, Duckhead?" asked the old man.

"No. He was too pinheaded. 'Sides, there's fellers higher up."

Then he told what he had learned, adding finally:

"It's a plumb mystery, anyhow! What's makin' that Company so durned secret 'bout it all?"

"It's civilization an' finance an' all them things!" growled his partner. "They've got th' business cards so stacked now th't they can't play th' game no other way. But it's mighty queer; it sure is! They've got a charter to build a power house down in this 'ere Toltec Gorge, an' yet they're plannin' to turn the water into that cavern an' run it through th' Mountain into th' Seven Troughs Cañon! That skunk must have lied to yer, Duckhead. He sure must!"

A glare which would have sent the fellow to the ground again came into Sternitt's eyes; but he growled:

"Lie or no lie, it looks reasonable, 'cause it's dead easy to change the run of that water. 'Twould only take a two-mile flume!"

There was a pause during which they smoked furiously and meditatively. Presently Sternitt smiled.

"I s'pose we'd oughter tell our grubstaker of this find, Jeff. Dahl's holdin' hands in 'most every game in th' valley, an' maybe they're stackin' th' cards against him."

"Great Socorro! I'd plumb forgot him, Duckhead. Look here! He's formin' a company ter use the Toltec water fer irrigation down there, an' I'll bet some, an' then a few, that's th' game the Gem State folks is playin' against him! Better git right down there, Duckhead, an' tell 'em."

Sternitt nodded ready assent. Then a doubtful look came into his eyes.

"I'm plumb tuckered out, Jeff. I've been meanderin' through tunnels and over ol' Red Warrior some promiscuous for th' last two days. S'pose you go down to Dahlhurst. You've had a pretty easy shift; doin' nothin' but gazin' at th' landscape down there in that cavern!"

"Sure I'll go!" agreed Bransford. "You've been up against it, all right."

But Sternitt did not tell his partner that his reason for staying up on the Mountain was to head off any more villainy of that Company's messenger, or spy. He well knew that such a man often makes up for his utter lack of courage by a cunning

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ingenuity and deliberateness of plotting, strongly intensified where revenge is the incentive; and he did not mean to leave his old partner to face any trouble alone.

So Bransford packed his small kit, and went down to Dahlhurst.

CHAPTER VII

QUICK ACTION ALL 'ROUND

"GOT your check book with you, Dolly?" asked the Senator's wife. He saw the well known curve which always appeared on her lips when working for something; and the bewitchingly roguish twinkle in her eyes which meant victory of some kind.

"I have," he laughed. "What's the order?"

"Make one to Mr. Curley Jenson for three hundred and fifty. I'm going to pay for that mare."

His smile changed to a scrutinizing, hopeful stare.

"You haven't delivered the goods yet!"

"I've got them! Pay-streak information; and it assays fine."

Then she told him clearly, and in business-like phrasing, the story which the prospector Bransford had brought to her.

"I guess that's it," muttered Dahl. "I—guess—that—is—it. I don't know that country, but those fellows have been prospecting for months all about there. They ought to know. But Elna! How'd they happen to come to you with the yarn?"

"I grubstaked them," she laughed, "and, of course, I get a third of all they strike. This time I get it all, for that find is of no use to them—any of it!"

"You grubstaked them!" exploded Dahl. "Say, kiddy! What is it you're not in?"

"I'm not in the Legislature, yet, Dolly; but I'll be in that when we suffragettes get all that's coming to us!"

He roared: "You suffragettes! That's you and Dora, I suppose. I'll bet that's your entire membership!"

"It's plenty!" she smiled. "It only takes the brains of two such suffragettes to win out against all you friv'lous statesmen. What are you going to do about it, Senator?"

"There's still some puzzle," he muttered, after a pause. "They've got the charter for a power house in the Toltec Gorge, and yet they're going to turn the water into Seven Troughs. They can't run any power house in Toltec, then!"

"Perhaps they don't want to!" suggested his wife.

His eyes narrowed together, and the lids nearly closed. Suddenly he sprang to his feet and exclaimed as he grabbed his hat—

"I'll find out something about that!"

"Going over to little ol' Stonycreek?" she rippled sweetly. "To ask Mr. Snowcraft?"

"I'm going to telegraph to Boisé for a copy of their charter."

"What! Do you mean to say that *you* have to look over their charter to find out what you're up against? After all these weeks, too! Well, well, and again, well! Drop your hat, Dolly. I'll let you look at my copy."

"Your copy?"

"Surest thing you know. I sent for one the first thing when I started to win that horse."

In a few moments she returned and handed him the paper. He opened it eagerly and glanced through it. Then, with a gleam of understanding, he growled, "Hmp!"

"That's lucid and specific!" smiled his wife. "About as lucid and specific as a candidate's speech when he's concealing all his intentions under a bunch of adjectives to decorate his Country and the Voters."

"I'll make it clearer!" grinned Dahl. "This charter is very broad—or very narrow. It gives them the right to use the Toltec water for power purposes, but there's not the slightest specification as to where the power house shall be built. Consequently, unless we head them off, they can turn that water over into the Seven Troughs Cañon and use it in the big new power plant they are building there. It's far less expense to run one house of twenty thousand horse-power than to run two of ten thousand horse-power each."

"What's the next play, Dolly?"

"We ought to be sure that they can do that; that the cavern is at such a level that they *can* turn the water in."

"Bransford's an old miner," urged Mrs. Dahl. "He knows all about levels and strata and such things. He says that a two-mile flume will carry that water into the cavern, all right!"

"I'd like to go up there myself," muttered Dahl, "or send our engineer, Ayland. But we'd surely be seen, and that would put the Company on its guard. If *that* spy quits the job they'll have another man on, at once!"

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"All right; I'll go. I and Dora. They'll never suspect a couple of giddy suffragettes of knowing or caring anything about engineering. If we do meet a spy, Dora will make love to him till he won't know whether he's on Red Warrior Mountain or in Elysium—wherever that little ol' place is."

"You'll be perfectly safe, of course," murmured Dahl, after a pause; "and if you impress upon Bransford the importance of correct information you'll get it, no doubt. We ought to be sure before I take the only step that can be taken."

"I'm getting you broken in, Dolly! You're really beginning to answer the reins. You've got a hunch, at last, that statesmanship doesn't consist entirely of rounding up objections, and difficulties, and considerations and similar frivolousness. It means cutting out the thing you want, and roping that, and hog-tying it and branding it, prompt an' immediate. We'll go to-morrow morning."

"WE'VE come up to dine with you, partner!" exclaimed Mrs. Dahl, when she and Dora rode up to the camp as old Bransford was cleaning some mountain trout. "Oh-h, Dora! Look at those beauties. We're in luck, aren't we?"

"I reckon we're in luck, too, Mrs. Dahl," gleamed the old man. "It's some sight for these old mountains to have such a crew as you ridin' up 'em."

The young women sprang from their horses and Elna put a package on the rough camp table.

"I brought our dessert with us, partner. We knew you'd have plenty of meat, but I don't think you ever make cake — with sugar on top."

"Just what Duckhead allus growls about. Says he's sick of venison an' trout, an' wants some sweet stuff. Here he comes."

Sternitt strode in. His handsome, frank, brown eyes glittered with surprise; but Elna noticed that his gaze lingered far longer on Dora than she thought the occasion justified.

"This is my chum, Miss Dora Rostler," she smiled. "Dora, I'll introduce my partners—Mr. Jeff Bransford and Mr. Duckhead Sternitt. Now! Let us help with the dinner. I could eat a coyote after that eighteen-mile climb. Been at it since five o'clock."

Sternitt whipped the saddles off the horses and wiped them down with a bunch of grass; an attention which Miss Dora watched with close and appreciative interest. But, although Mrs. Dahl hovered around Bransford, he would hear of no help, telling her that cooking trout was his specialty. So she dropped on to a clump of bunch-grass and gazed at the bald slopes of the Red Warrior Mountain, and from them to the northward peaks among which she knew that the Toltec Gorge nestled.

As they squatted on the ground—there being no chairs—she remarked:

"Have you looked over that stretch between here and the Gorge, Bransford? We're sure anxious to know if you're right about the levels."

"If I'm wrong," growled the old man, "the engineers of that Company are wrong. They've commenced on the flume!"

"Commenced! Already!"

He nodded affirmatively. "They rushed a gang over there 'round Bald Point yesterday morning, choppin' timber. An' they've hauled up the first load of plank over the divide from their Seven Troughs power house; flume plank, 'tis!"

"Well, they're showing their hand then," smiled Mrs. Dahl. "That's what we came up to find out."

"I suspicioned that," announced Bransford. "Anyway, if you hadn't come up, Duckhead was goin' down this afternoon ter tell yer."

"I've got to go down, anyway," asserted Sternitt stoutly. "There's some store stuff to get. Salt an' coffee an' flour."

His eyes were fastened on Dora as he spoke, and Mrs. Dahl smiled knowingly.

They finished their meal, including the dainty cakes which she had brought, and two hours after their arrival they started back, Sternitt with them on a pack burro. Although the descent was easier on the horses than the ascent had been, any pace faster than a walk was impossible over most of the rough trail. After they had left Sternitt at the branch trail to the Dahlhurst store, Mrs. Dahl turned to Dora:

"You are positively shameful, young lady! I shall have to expel you from our organization if you carry on this way—and with a poor innocent young prospector, too!"

"What's the especial brand of trouble, now?" laughed the girl; but she could not conceal a slight touch of embarrassment.

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"Making eyes at poor Sternitt, when we're on a business trip—an important business trip. That's the brand, young lady!"

"I didn't make eyes. I had to look at him when he spoke to me. Didn't I?"

"Certainly not! A true suffragette never looks at men; she looks at what they do. Now, you mustn't come over to the ranch, dear! We've had some Teddy Roosevelt riding to-day, besides the exertion you've had in holding Mr. Sternitt's attention. I'll send one of the boys over for the horse."

IN SPITE of her easy raillery of Dora, she felt intense eagerness to tell her husband of the day's developments, and instead of going at once to her home she rode into Dahlhurst. Gliding into the Dahl & Bentler office she glanced at the young clerk across the room, and whispered to her husband:

"The level's all right. They've started on the flume!"

"I'm not surprised to hear it. That spy has reported to them, no doubt; and they're going to try to rush that job through before we can take any action. But I'll rush, too! I shall go to Boisé to-night, Elna."

"The Legislature doesn't meet until next week," she pouted.

"There are men there now whom I must see," he insisted.

Then, in answer to the question in her eyes, he continued:

"We'll have to draw up a bill to prohibit the diversion of any stream from its old channel. That's where the fight will come, and we shall need all our friends; every one! I must be on hand, at once, my girl!"

"Right y'ar-re, pardner! I'll be over there to see you pull the strings after I've looked into some little matters around home here. Say, Dolly! Coming down the trail, young Sternitt said he'd be in to see you in the morning. He says he's thoroughly tired of prospecting and would like to get some work here in the valley. He's a Wyoming man—a good stockman. What shall I tell him?"

"Your father will take him on, Elna. Buck Ewing smashed a leg this morning—a steer fell on him; and he won't ride a horse again for a long time, I'm afraid—if he ever does. If Sternitt's a good man he can fill that job."

"You say 'if.' Don't you know that he is a good man?"

"I do! Hornstuttle of Cheyenne told me last Fall that Sternitt is one of the straightest, cleanest stockmen he ever saw on a horse—or off it! That's saying plenty."

Mrs. Dahl's eyes took on a peculiarly benign expression. "If Dora is hit, and I think she is, a first-class cattleman would make a handy asset on that ranch. I almost like him myself enough to marry him, if I wasn't already staked." And she sauntered out, leaving her husband speechless at this further development of the day's work. But as she paused at the door and looked back, waving her hand, he gasped:

"Say, Elna! Are you grubstaking him on *that* prospect? If so, how're you going to divide?"

But she only tossed her head saucily, and, mounting her horse, cantered home.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. DAHL STARTS A STAMPEDE

THE Legislature had been in session for ten days when Mrs. Dahl received a letter from her husband:

> Our Bill for the Toltec Gorge Irrigation Project has passed both Houses, without any opposition from the Gem State people. The Bill for the Preservation of Streams in their Old Channels has been introduced and referred to the Public Lands Committee; and the Chairman of that Committee is Hansford—the creation and tool of the Gem State Company.
>
> It is certain that they are determined to beat us and so keep the rest of the Tehama Valley in sagebrush and greasewood. I have credible information that they are ready, as usual, to buy any and all necessary votes. Still, our organization is holding well together and I think we can count on the Bill passing both Houses.
>
> But—and here's where we are very lame—the Governor is another product of the Gem State people and *he will veto the bill, sure.* Unless we can round up a two-thirds majority in both Houses, we're beaten.
>
> I don't suppose there can be any new development there, at home? The battlefield is confined to Boisé.
>
> Lovingly yours,
> PHILIP DAHL

A deep, strong understanding and disapproving frown was on little Mrs. Dahl's face as she read; but at the last sentence it lightened up into a bright, a very bewitching, smile.

"Oh, you men!" she rippled. "You statesmen and politicians! You know-alls! Always with eyes focused on one point only. 'The battlefield is confined to Boisé,'

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eh? Perhaps it is, and then again perhaps it is not. Boisé doesn't cover the entire map of dear ol' Idaho."

She sat for half an hour after that, with tiny furrows in her brow and her eyelids drooped in deep thought. Then she sprang to her feet, put on her hat and walked to the office of the Dahlhurst *Gazette*.

Hoflund, the editor, greeted her in the manner with which every man and almost every woman greeted her. He was old enough to be her father and not afraid to bestow frank, open compliments upon her.

"It would be worth the cost of an extra edition to write up your visit, Mrs. Dahl; and your appearance."

"An extra!" she exclaimed. "The weekly isn't out yet, is it?"

"Not till to-morrow. I meant, if an extra edition was necessary, it would be well worth it."

"I'm glad I'm in time," she smiled. "I've had a letter from the Senator and he says that the opposition to that Bill for keeping streams in their old channels is fierce! He says that the opponents are moving heaven and earth to beat it, and I want you to write a red-hot, scathing, bleaching, branding and convincing article about them in your very fiercest style."

Hoflund's eyes drew together and the corners of his mouth drooped as he shook his head.

"I'd like to do that, my dear Mrs. Dahl. It would suit me first rate; but I've had advice from Boisé—from the truest friends of that Bill—that the wisest and most helpful policy for the *Gazette* just now will be to put the brightest light upon the prospects of that Bill. It is thought that the people here need, and should have, every particle of hope, and encouragement we can give them."

With an indignant flash she retorted:

"That means that the supporters of the Bill are on the defense instead of the aggressive; that they're warding off blows and smiling sweetly, instead of scowling fierce scowls and swatting the enemy. That policy may appeal to Idaho statesmen but it won't appeal to Idaho ranchmen!"

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Dahl. But what's the use of appealing just now to the ranchmen—the citizens of the State? Their representatives are at Boisé and are the men who make laws. The citizens have no influence except at election time."

"There it is again! You look half way and then close your eyes. Can't you see that if we stir up the men of the State, stir them up till they boil, they'll jump on their Senators and legislators so hard and so quick that those men won't dare to vote 'No?' "

"Who'll stir them up, Mrs. Dahl?"

"I!" she gleamed. "That is, I'll start the stampede. I'm Mrs. 'Watch Me' Dahl. Run in that red-hot article. Tell our people and the people of all the other valleys that the God-given mountain streams are in danger of being taken away from the men and the women who have worn out their lives in building up our State."

Hoflund's doubt and hesitation glowed into a fierce determination. He slammed his big fist down on the desk and exploded:

"I'll do it! I believe you are right, Mrs. Dahl."

"You do that and I'll do my share," she said with intense earnestness. "I know the men in this section, and who will help. Watch me!" And with a cheery laugh she left the office.

TWENTY-FOUR hours afterward her eyes were twinkling with enjoyment and satisfaction at a front-page article in the *Gazette*. It had a triple column three-inch scare head:

WATER TO BE MONOPOLIZED

But as she read, some little consternation showed in her face.

"The editor sure let himself out!" she murmured. "If it was a tirade on cattle rustling, with the same adjectives, there'd be some killings follow. There's a good deal of the Old West left here, yet."

After supper she busied herself with a file of old newspapers and a map; locating the larger streams and noting the names of political men in the districts favored by those streams. As the clock finished striking ten, she heard a horse gallop into the yard, and, wondering at the late visitor, she went on to the porch. Little Buddy Jensen leaped from his pony and gasped:

"Oh, Mrs. Dahl! Mother told me to come over an' tell you! They're all gone up the cañon to burn the flume!"

She clutched at one of the veranda posts for support and muttered to herself:

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"That article! It's started them—and where will they stop?"

Then she grasped the boy's shoulder.

"Who's gone, Buddy? Tell me who!" she asked.

"Dunno, Mrs. Dahl. A whole bunch of 'em rode into our yard an' talked like they were goin' after horse thieves. Dad ordered me away, so I didn't get any good look at 'em."

"How many were there, Bud?"

"Must have been forty—maybe fifty. An' dad's gone with 'em; an' Greaser Pete, an' Baldy."

She gasped again. Jensen, Curly Jensen, was a typical Old West man who had already growled open and fierce imprecations against the Gem State Company. As a leader she knew that he would be followed into any conflict with men, animals or nature.

Hoarsely she demanded:

"When did they go, Buddy? How long ago?"

"Pretty near an hour. I'd have been here sooner, only my pony stampeded when Dad and Greaser roped theirs."

"Ride back, my boy! Tell your mother that I'll find some way to stop them. There'll be no trouble."

She darted to the stable, called, "Steve!" kicked at his bunkroom door and got no response.

"He's gone, too!" she muttered almost despairingly; but she rushed over to the corral, caught her horse, threw on the saddle and bridle, and mounted.

"An hour's start!" she gasped again. "On a good trail I could catch them; but, up that cañon—at night too——"

She shuddered slightly at the prospect. But as Smooch settled into a steady, long-reaching gallop, the usual stimulus of a dashing ride brought her again into her buoyant spirit.

She reached the cañon mouth and pulled Smooch down to a steadier gait. There was a moon which at some points flooded the trail with light; but on the frequent short turns and cross stretches the dark shadows of the thousand-foot peaks put everything into blackness.

Once she heard the savage growl of a bear—with cubs, no doubt—and, sometimes close by, sometimes from some mysterious, gloomy side gulch, came the weird dismal screech of an owl.

But all that, and the deathly loneliness of the somber cañon had but little effect on her. She was thinking of what was ahead. She well knew the class of men in mountain construction camps; men to whom a fight, a struggle even to death, was but welcome recreation. And she also knew the old Western spirit, though beneath the surface, still in cowboys—the instant decision to do, and the ever ready gun to do with. No attack could be made on that flume without its toll of lives; and she knew, she was thoroughly convinced, that the fierce denunciations in Hoflund's article, the arraignment of the Gem State Company, and the vivid, lashing predictions of disaster to every Idaho valley, had roused those men to an annihilating frenzy.

And she had caused that article! She had inspired Hoflund with her own spirit; and the result was ahead of her. Perhaps even now men were plunging over precipitous ledges in the struggle of death.

She urged Smooch as she had never urged him before. Stumbling, slipping and more than once going on to his knees, the splendid brute responded. Suddenly, just as the snowy peaks of Red Warrior Mountain, gorgeously silvered by the moonlight, came into her eager view, the same moonbeams showed the party nearly a mile ahead. In an instant her hand grasped the revolver from her belt. A shot echoed and reëchoed from the surrounding mountains. Every horse in that bunch wheeled on his hind legs; every man's hand instinctively went to his hip.

She loped up to them and laughed:

"Is this a square deal, boys? Meandering off on a little excursion like this without inviting me! Can't I come in on fun of this brand?"

There were grunts of intense surprise, and here and there a short, impulsive, smiling word of welcome. She urged her horse through the bunch, exclaiming—

"I've been tailing behind all the trip; I'm going in the lead, now!"

CHAPTER IX

MRS. DAHL BECOMES ELOQUENT

WHEN she *was* in the lead they had reached the small flat plateau on which the prospectors had camped. Here she wheeled her horse right across the path

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of the others, and holding up her whip hand, exclaimed:

"Boys! You've never heard of a round-up on the Red Warrior yet! No man ever has; but I've got you millin' now and you're goin' to listen to me!

"Why didn't you hold a regular meeting to decide on this? I know what you're going over there for—" pointing her quirt toward Bald Point, which the flume was rounding— "and you're going too quick; you sure are! Haven't you any confidence in Phil Dahl—'Watch Me' Dahl? The very man you kidnaped down at old Stonycreek and brought up into the Tehama Valley; the man who started Dahlhurst, and built it up and made it the County Seat; the man whom you, yourselves, have made your Senator!"

"An' we'll make him Governor next election!" yelled Kansas Fanning, followed by a score of hoarse voices echoing the prediction.

"He's at Boisé now!" persisted Mrs. Dahl. "Working and working day and night to beat this Gem State Company, while you are going up there to play into their hands!"

A burst of furious emphasis broke from Curly Jensen.

"We'll play 'em, all right! Inside of an hour they'll have charcoal to sell, 'stead of water!"

She backed her horse to stop his plunging advance up the trail.

"You're playing into their hands, I tell you!" she exploded. "Are you men—men of the Tehama Valley; or are you suffragettes—English suffragettes, whose way of handling big affairs is to sneak about, in the dark of the night, breaking glass and setting fires? Answer me that!"

"Your husband's a big man, an' a good one!" growled Wes Terryberry, his grizzly gray hair and mustache quivering with his feelings. "But he hasn't stopped that flume; and we're goin' to!"

"And play into that bribing Company's hands!" repeated Elna, scornfully. "What do they care for the twenty or thirty thousand dollars that it'll cost to rebuild that flume?"

She snapped her quirt in the air with a report like a gun.

"Not that!" she continued. "A five-million-dollar Company knocked out by a picayune little twenty thousand? Think again, little brothers! They'll make big capital of that at Boisé, if you do it. They'll point out that you men of the Tehama Valley—and your representatives—are unfit to suggest laws, when you don't know how to keep within the law. I tell you, boys, you'll kill that Bill—the Bill which Senator 'Watch Me' Dahl and the bunch of strong, fine men back of him, are going to put through!"

The horses shifted uneasily, showing the feelings of the men. There were muttered consultations, growls and objections. Then Terryberry edged closer to her, wheeled his horse to face the men, and growled:

"Ther's good sound sense in that, boys! Good sound sense! I reckon we're buttin' in where 'tain't none of our business—just yet!"

"Don't call it butting in!" gleamed Elna.

She tossed her sombrero to the ground, and her hair, rippling about her head like a blown flame, caught the glory of the moon and held it. Her brown face glowed and her splendid, luminous eyes showed purpose and energy which enthralled the men. She stood in her stirrups and her quirt waved and snapped above her head as she exclaimed:

"Who—should—butt—in—but — you — men! You splendid fellows of the Tehama Valley! Slam that Company till they beg for mercy; but do it with brains, not with a little ol' box of matches. Any Greaser, any kid, can do that, and get the laugh!

"Listen to me a moment longer. You, Jensen, Curly Jensen! You've got influence in our valley. Use it! Our people recognize a good man as quick as they recognize a good horse. Get out among all the outlying men and smash that coyote, Snowcraft! He's fought Dahlhurst and our valley ever since we were on the map. He's a bribe-taking, lying, thieving, loan shark! Likewise an' also, he's the representative of our neighboring district, and the tool of the Gem State crowd.

"Smash him! Go for the man, not what the man's doing! Get out among his constituents and stir them up. No other man can do that better than you. Make them write to him and let him know that if he bucks against that Bill he'll never reach Boisé again after this term!"

She wheeled her horse sharply and stretched her shapely arm out toward the old cattleman, Terryberry.

"Terryberry! Go over into the Seven

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Troughs Valley, and smash Hansford the same way. He's another Gem State Company product, but he's working for a nomination to Congress, next election. Make every man in the valley write him that he's a back number if he votes against that Bill. You can round them up in that district, and brand them as you darn—" she checked herself as a roar of appreciative applause came from the bunch—"as you please. You're well known out there. You've bought feeding steers in that valley for years, and they know you, and will listen to you. Do it!"

In sharp, enthralling appeals she singled out a dozen other men, assigning them to outlying districts. Then, without waiting for response, she came down to business tones:

"It'll be some expense to do this. Some of you can stand it—and will! But some of you will have to be staked. We'll pass the hat!"

SHE glanced at her sombrero lying on the rocks, and an instant vault took a young cowboy from his saddle. He picked it up and handed it to her.

"Thanks, Baldy! It's not going on my head; it's going on a mission."

She drew a wallet from her bosom, took out a bill and waved it over her head.

"I open the game—for fifty! Who's coming in?"

Then she sidled her horse up to one man after another. As she reached the last the sombrero was grasped by two sides of its broad brim, and sagging warningly.

"Good for the new Tehama Valley Square Deal Association!" she shouted. "Let's meander back. There's a case of Pilsener at the ol' Dahl homestead that wants smashing. Who comes in on that?"

Every horse was wheeled. Not a murmur came from any lips. Elna edged her horse alongside of the old stockman's.

"When will you start for Seven Troughs?" she asked in low tones.

"To-morrow, Mrs. Dahl. If we're goin' to do anythin' we must do it quick."

"Will you mind if I go with you? That is the district where most of our trouble will come from. Hansford is the Chairman of the Public Lands Committee, and he's got his district clean under his thumb — and that means the thumb of the Gem State crowd. And he has big influence with other members of the Legislature. Mr. Dahl has no doubt that he's a distributor of the Company's money."

"Sure I'll be glad to have you go!" exclaimed the old man; but there was a ring of surprise and a touch of doubt in his tones.

"It's the wives I want to talk to," she urged. "The wives and daughters. Men are much more influenced by them than they ever acknowledge, even to themselves. We must get every voter to jump on Hansford. He'd sooner go to Congress than keep on herding with the Gem State people, and we'll swing him over against them! Watch us! Eh, Mr. Terryberry?"

It was late that night—no, early the next morning—before the crowd of exuberant, enthusiastic men left the Dahl home. Then the little woman dropped onto a lounge and dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief for a few minutes, while a bewitchingly plaintive smile hovered around her lips.

"I'm pretty nearly broke up," she murmured. "I went too fast with that article. Gee! It's a corker! But I've got 'em rounded up again. I've got a bunch of the finest missionaries ever, ready for work—and they'll work! They're as willing for it as a horse that's been corralled for a week."

CHAPTER X

MRS. DAHL MAKES A CONVERT

THE day for the vote on the Dahl Bill arrived, and the Senator's wife sat in the gallery eagerly listening to her husband's closing speech. Her eyes flashed with pride at his manly, rousing appeal, colored vividly with strong, if perhaps somewhat unpolished, bursts of Western eloquence.

She was too anxious and too excited to stay during the long roll-call vote; and sauntering out into the lobby, she paced back and forth feverishly. Her love for her valley, her keen understanding of what it would mean to that valley if the Bill was defeated, made every minute seem as long as an hour.

She took a letter, received that morning but still unopened, from her satchel and glanced listlessly over the first page, but suddenly her lips curved into a smile and

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her eyes lit up with a roguishly appreciative twinkle as she read:

My little mare, you darling, is better and lovelier every day. Bert—don't you ever dare to speak his miserable nickname, Duckhead, again—has ridden with me a good deal, and I suppose he's fallen in love with her. Anyway, he's proposed to her owner, and as mother likes him almost as well as I do, I've agreed to become Mrs. Sternitt for the present. Reno's near by you know, so if the partnership doesn't pan out, well——

We shall go back to our ranch next month, when the present lease expires, and Bert will, of course, take charge of it all. When are you coming home? I can't fix the date for our wedding until I know that.

DORA

"Quick work!" gleamed Mrs. Dahl. "Four weeks ago they were utter strangers; now, they want me to hurry back so they can be married! I'll be glad to go, too. This stuffy old Capital isn't like the dear Tehama Valley."

At that moment a roaring cheer came from the chamber, and one of the members, Carlson, sprang from the door and toward her.

"It's gone through, Mrs. Dahl! Hansford swung his entire Committee into line *for* the Bill. That's the biggest surprise this Legislature's ever struck! He's always been a Gem State man, and now he swings over against them! The majority is the largest of any bill this session. Plenty to carry it over the Governor's veto, if he's fool enough to veto it. I congratulate you on your husband, my dear lady. His was one of the strongest speeches I ever heard! He's crowded up in there with hand-shakers; but he'll be out soon."

She leaned against one of the windows, receiving other good words. Suddenly a finger was laid lightly on her arm, and turning she saw the well built figure and handsome face of Senator Hansford.

"WILL you pardon me, Mrs. Dahl? I know of your intense interest in that Bill and how you worked for it, and I want to offer you my strongest, my most sincere, congratulations on its passage."

She drew herself up, very erect; and her eyes, clear, level and with a touch of doubt and suspicion, looked fairly into his. But he glanced sharply around to see if he could be overheard and continued:

"I have to thank you for the largest bunch of mail from my constituents in the Seven Troughs Valley that I ever received in one session; and it was mail which could not be ignored. It is owing to your campaign up there that my Committee reported that Bill favorably."

She colored a little, and in very gentle tones replied—

"I think, Senator, that if you knew the threatened trouble which put me on to that work, trouble which I myself nearly caused, you would modify your opinion of me."

"Nothing could do that!" he asserted with a frank smile of admiration. Then with another glance around, and lowering his voice, he said:

"I believe you know how to keep silent as well as how to convince and enthuse men. It is a secret at present, but Senator Dahl will receive the nomination for Governor next Fall!"

"For Governor?"

Her surprise at hearing that from Senator Hansford was intense. Her eyes expressed that and plenty of doubt as she smiled:

"I thought you would work for that position, Senator! You've been spoken of as the strongest candidate."

"Your husband is the strongest candidate," he insisted. "To-day cinched that! My ambition is Washington. I mean to run for Congress next election, and as my full support will be thrown to Senator Dahl for the governorship, I hope he will see the way to support me. No, I am not looking for any promises. I'll have to take what comes; but I hope, very much, that the future first lady of Idaho will remember that she can make converts as well as hold her adherents."

He daintily raised her hand and touched his lips to it. Then, with a courteous bow, he left her.

"Am I awake?" she gasped to herself. "Hansford supporting Dolly, after all I did to him, over there in the Seven Troughs Valley! I'm not wise to all of it, yet, I see! There are undercurrents in these little ol' politics which go too deep for me at present. But I'm growing; I sure am!"

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THE CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE FOR READERS, WRITERS AND ADVENTURERS

WHAT type makes the best man on a hard trail? Do you agree with Mr. Kimber in the letter that follows? Are blue or gray eyes and light hair better signs than black or brown eyes and dark hair? What's the best weight-and-height combination? How about age and nationality? Is the same type good for the Tropics that is good for the North?

This strikes me as an extremely interesting question, and one of real practical value to those having expeditions in mind. Let's hear from the rest of you.

That's the kind of thing our Camp-Fire is for. There are some other questions, bearing on arms and equipment, that it might pay us to discuss. Also, having, among us, run down the mystery of the death of Bully Hayes (honestly, I'll soon get time to shape up those letters for you), we're still looking for testimony on whether General Sir Hector MacDonald is really dead or not.

Also I'm still welcoming letters as to whether Fred V. Williams in his "Cost of the Battle-Lust" drew a correct picture of the battle of Tia Juana.

And letters on what really happened at the storming of Dargai; we printed some and have some more.

AND here's a new one. Did an Irishman named Lawrence O'Rourke become a Buddhist priest and attain great power as such? Is he alive? Is he the man known by some of you as my Lord Abbot, U Dhammaloka? And how about him anyway? Several months ago we published a short article about Lawrence O'Rourke, Buddhist. I've found out some things since then, but want to know a lot more. From what I can gather it's an interesting subject.

Come ahead with any information you have on any of the above. Also, if you have any topic of a practical nature in the field of adventure and want opinions from other Camp-Fire members, come ahead with that. Or any adventure mysteries in real life to be solved by all of us getting together on them.

Here's Mr. Kimber's letter:

I also have hit the trail. Prospected for 20 years from the 130-degree country to the 60-degree below; any old-timer knows what that means without a lot of "I's." Oh, why didn't I meet Jack Tate of New York a few years ago, and fortunate indeed will be the boys that go with him! I would advise, though, that he put them through a course of stunts first. It is not the man in perfect physical condition that gets the farthest, but the man with the grit to not get tired till that day's destination is reached, and not then until after the dishes are washed. Any old "Sour Dough" will remember the big husky men sitting in the snow on the Chilkoot and Dyea passes crying their eyes out for Frisco, New York, Chicago and other places.

The later years of my prospecting I played a lone hand, and now at 41, with a loving wife and two sweet children, am out of the game; but from the sum of my experience would like to advise Jack Tate to pick men who weigh about 150, raw-boned, blue- or gray-eyed, with whip-cord leg muscles. Take no notice of nationality or age. There are men to-day at 60 who are 500 per cent. better on the trail than unseasoned young men. Here's good luck and success to Jack Tate and his party.—A. W. KIMBER.

MOST of you already know *Craig Kennedy*, scientific detective, and have found several other old friends in "The Abduction Club," the book-length complete novel in this issue, by Arthur B Reeve. "The story itself," writes Mr. Reeve, "was the result of a first-hand study with the aid of such friends as Mr. Frederick H. Whitin of the Committee of Fourteen, Mr. George Kneeland of the Rockefeller Bureau of Social Hygiene—plus *Craig Kennedy* himself, ably assisted by my new woman detective, *Clara Kendall*, and the faithful *Walter Jameson*."

NOW note what it means when we say, "These are the days of specialization." Ever since his Brooklyn high-school days Mr. Reeve has shown his bent for writing, but it was his work in the sciences at

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Princeton and in criminal law at the New York Law School that interested him in the scientific running-down of criminals and gave him the foundation of the knowledge necessary for such stories as those of *Craig Kennedy*. Since then, of course, he has added greatly to his practical experience from first-hand sources—detectives, police, and others dealing with criminal and sociological conditions. It takes a specialist to write really A1 detective stories that make all hands "sit up and take notice."

A FEW words from an old Sour Dough. And here's hoping he strikes it rich and plentiful:

Have been cowboy, hunter and trapper, Government packer and scout, miner and prospector, civil engineer on Western Pacific R. R. from start to finish, etc. Am now trying to make a grubstake placer-mining on a leased claim here in North Carolina, with four leaky sluice boxes, a broken shovel, a broken pick with a crooked handle, an old ax, an 8-lb. sledge hammer with a willow stick for a handle, and a gold pan. Well, an old Sour Dough has to take the weather as he finds it.

Hapsburg Liebe's scheme for a metal identification-card is nearly the right idea, but don't go quite far enough. Why not make the belt buckle of brass, either oval or square like the old army buckles, and heavy, with the adventurer's device on the outside and the identification-card on the inside? Reason—a good strong belt with a heavy buckle makes one of the best implements to fight your way out of a crowd of natives, when they double up on you, that I know of.—No. C 198.

W. TOWNEND'S story, "Irish," speaks for itself through its title. I'd like to know what you think of that tale. Those of you familiar with the Boer War will, I think, find it very true to facts, allowing for intentional changes for fictional purposes. Those of you who are Irish—well, isn't this a true picture of an Irishman? Of the Irishman who hates the English, yet enlists in their army?

Though it is not given in the story, Larry's real regiment was the Connaught Rangers.

Here are some pieces out of a letter from Mr. Townend:

The description of the advance to the Tugela, the preliminary fight before Spion Kop—the Irish were not on the top of the hill in the big mop-up when four regiments were shelled all day—and the charge at Inniskilling Hill: these are absolutely accurate. . . . . At the battle of Colenso, the third battle in the Black Week, when Butler got smashed up, the Irish Brigade went forward in exactly the same formation and manner as I describe. Had not a Boer discharged his rifle five minutes too soon, without waiting for the signal, the Brigade would have been absolutely annihilated, as it was imagined that the attack was being made beyond the limits of the Boer trenches. The guns were farther back. Botha brought down thousands of men sixteen miles from Ladysmith, by the way, knowing a good deal more about our own plans, apparently, than poor old Butler, the "Ferryman."

IT IS absolutely proved that about twenty of the Irishmen—only these were Dublin Fusiliers—crossed the Tugela—by swimming. The ford was non-existent, and many were drowned, carried down by their ammunition pouches. When they had crossed the River they made for the trenches by themselves and were shot down to a man. Owing to the scattered nature of the fight, the order to retire did not reach the Irish until long after it was given. Gallopers were killed, etc., but, when the word did actually reach them, the men were so mad that in many cases officers and sergeants had to drag them out of action, out of range of the trench guns. (This, by the way, is a *fault* of the Irish, not a *virtue*. Retreating is almost an impossibility with them.) In the attack on Inniskilling Hill by the Irish the casualties were tremendous; the Inniskilling Fusiliers came out of action with but four officers alive and unwounded. (The Hill was called Railway Hill before the fight, its name being changed to Inniskilling Hill later.)

The bravery of the Irish soldiers in this charge so aroused the admiration of the Boers that in many instances they deliberately marked out special men and dragged them down as they reached the trench, capturing them rather than killing. This sounds incredible, but it's true.

THE charge was a failure technically, but it was the preliminary to the advance four days later, when Butler's army stormed Pieter's Hill and opened the road into Ladysmith.

When the dead and wounded were lying between the British and Dutch lines during the fight—some were unattended for three days and nights—a gruff voice shouted in the night, "Why don't you come out and look after your wounded?" But, of course, nothing could be done until the armistice. Only very few survived. The Boers did what they could to relieve the sufferings, but they would not have allowed our men to leave cover to carry the wounded in. . . . .

The message sent by the British Irish Brigade to the Boer Irish Brigade was that if they ever met they'd go through them as the devil went through Athlone—in standing leaps. They did not meet, however.

THE above reminds me that a year or two ago some one wrote in objecting to one of our stories in which an Irishman showed himself a brave man, and making the statement that all Irishmen had proved themselves chronic and notorious cowards from the dawn of history to the present day. It was too ridiculous to deserve an answer, but it's interesting to know there's some one in the world who thinks that.

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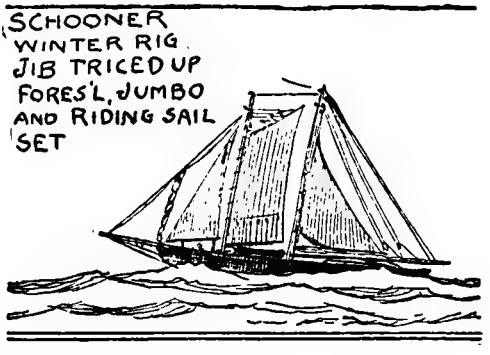
THOUGH, as stated before, the Adventurers' Club has no connection with the Camp-Fire or this magazine, in reply to numerous inquiries I have drawn up data concerning the Club and how to join it, and shall be glad to send it on request.

THOSE who know the tales and traditions of the Banks fisherman will recognize the real incident back of "Hard-Luck Finnegan." The rest is fiction built on Mr. Wallace's own experiences on a halibutter.

Mr. Wallace can draw as well as write. (Also he's recently become editor of the *Canadian Fisherman.*) I thought you might be interested in these two sketches he sent me once, particularly as you've met in several of his stories the boat he calls the *Isabel Winslow.*



QUITE a number of people who have spent more or less time in India have written in saying they like Talbot Mundy's stories of that country but lamenting the fact that he has pictured some of his Rajputs as Mohammedans. Here is Mr. Mundy's reply:

May I hit back at all these gentlemen who have attacked my Mussulman Rajputs, or Rangars, so earnestly and with such conviction? I know they think they're right, but I *know* I'm right, which is rather different. There are, or were at the last census, 1,875,387 Mohammedan Rajputs all told; most of them are the descendants of men who were "converted" when the Moslems overran the country in the eleventh century, and later; some of them, though, date their desertion of Hinduism to as late as Akbar's time, and a few are proselytes of quite recent date.

AS FOR the name Khan, which several readers have objected to as being utterly un-Rajput (to coin a word), there are so many instances in history of Rajputs having such a name, or title, that it seems needless to select. However, Amir Khan was a Rajput chief, who surrendered to the British in Wellesley's time. Shaidad Khan was a Rajput officer of Irregulars, who displayed great gallantry at the time of the Mutiny, in '57.

The very name Khan is evidence that the man, or else his ancestors, are converts. The Rangars are despised and hated by the Hindus; many Englishmen in '57 made the mistake of adopting the Hindu opinion of them; as a matter of fact, however, the Rangars did more to aid the British than the Hindus did.

I chose the Rangars to write about more particularly because the fact that they were hated and mistrusted—the fact that they proved themselves such magnificent soldiers and loyal gentlemen—and the fact that custom, tradition, and prejudice have combined to deprive them of their dues appealed to me. Even Flora Annie Steele, who writes otherwise so discerningly about India, fails to give their due to these Mohammedan gentlemen—does not seem to realize, in fact, that only clean, gentlemanly pride is keeping them distinct and what they are, in spite and in the teeth of almost overwhelming Hindu enmity.

E. A. MORPHY—you will remember that by special grant from us of the Camp-Fire he has been endowed with the unique and particular right of using real cuss words instead of dashes in our Camp-Fire talks—knows India better than most and has this to say about the Rajputs:

Not having any books of reference at hand, I do not pretend to quote authorities; but I think there are about 1,900,000 Mohammedan Rajputs—merely a fifth of total number.

All Rajputs were originally the *crême de la crême* of Hinduism—next to the Brahmans. But when the Moguls came they said, "Let half this village be of the true faith." They said it of many Rajput villages, and thus many stanch Brahmans shifted their belief permanently. Otherwise they would have merged into the ineffable and unknown, dropping their heads *en route.*

Many of the Rajput cavalrymen are Mohammedans. Four or five Rajput infantry regiments are purely Hindu Rajputs. Others are mixed (Hindu and Mohammedans). All Rajputs are high-caste men. Rajputs are Kshatriyas—the fighting caste

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of Brahmans—and are only Mohammedans by the accident I mention. . . .

By next mail I'll send you a list of Rajput regiments, with the percentage of Mohammedan companies or squadrons in each. As well as I can remember there are only one or two cavalry regiments of Rajputs without one or more squadrons of Mohammedans.

The Mohammedan is, as a rule, truer to his salt than a Hindu; but it takes the devil of a lot to beat a Sikh for fidelity, though he is rarely as "matey" as a Mohammedan can be.

If any of you still have doubt, consult the Encyclopædia Britannica, Eleventh Edition, Vol. 22, page 865, heading "Rajputana"—

"The great majority adhere to the Hindu religion, but 1,875,387 are entered as Mohammedans."

Also in "Forty-One Years of India," by Field Marshal Lord Roberts, of Kandahar, V. C., K. G., etc., page 71, footnote:

"*Rangars.* A name applied by the Hindus to any Rajput who has, or whose ancestors have, been converted to Islam. One day in June, Shaidad Khan, a Resaidar of this class, etc."

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

IF I were sure none of you would read this before you read the story I'd tell you the actual happening on which "Kid Ivanhoe" is based. Anyhow, we can have this word from the author, F. L. Smith:

I THINK the folks who are always knocking the boxing game would drop the hammer if they could see some of the collections that are taken up at the fight clubs. For example, last year the fans at a large N. Y. club raised over $400 in about ten minutes for a comparatively unknown prelim. fighter who stood to lose his eyesight unless he could pay for an expensive operation. And again: A boxer who had never attained real prominence was killed in a railroad accident. His widow was about to become a mother. At four clubs in greater New York the hat was passed and the young woman was given a sum in excess of $1,000.

These collections consist of real cash currency —no shoe buttons, I. O. U.'s or pledged amounts —and are taken up without any fanfare of trumpets or waving of the American flag. Also, the person who receives the money is not made to feel that he or she is an object of charity.

SUCH of you as plan a trip to South or Central America and want reliable information would do well to write to John Barrett, Director General, the Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., for their "List of Publications." Also, to a reasonable extent, the Union is prepared to answer inquiries not covered by their many books and pamphlets sent free or for a moderate charge. They also publish an excellent magazine devoted entirely to the Latin-American republics.

Information on most foreign countries can be secured from the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Washington, D. C.

HAVE you ever considered the dramatic things that lie behind the printed words of our "Lost Trails" department? The "hankering" for old friends, old pals of many an adventure, whom years and events have hidden in oblivion, the missing son or father, perhaps half mourned as dead? If we could only read all there is behind those brief lines in "Lost Trails"! Adventure and romance, pathos and heartbreak, tragedy, the aching hope, joyful reunion, or—silence.

Into that small page or two of "Lost Trails" come blind voices from many distant places, to be sent out again, blind and groping and half hopeful, to reach into the far corners of the earth in further quest.

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Sometimes there are strange happenings. There is that thing we call coincidence, having no better name. Those items with the tragedy so plain behind them are not for discussion here, but I can give two letters recently received that tell how friends are brought together:

You may stop the notice in "Lost Trails" which you very kindly published for me. This, to me, is remarkable, as I have employed a detective bureau in the endeavor to find ——, who is a fine chap. I have a very good position for him, running out of Boston, his old home town, which I know will please him immensely. Accept my thanks.

I enclose his letter. Mind you, I have never heard of nor seen —— since becoming separated in a row with river-pirates above Hankow, China.

Very truly yours, ——

THIS second lost trail was really picked up through the "Wanted" department.

There are many strange happenings in this old world, but what can be more strange than the following?

About two months ago I sent you a letter in regard to a pal to go to Africa with me. I have watched ADVENTURE, and had almost given up hope of seeing it in print, and this morning as I was leaving St. Paul for this city I purchased ADVENTURE, and of course looked at once for my letter. Imagine my surprise to find on page 220 the letter to you from my old friend that made the trip with me to Africa in 1901, and when I saw his name—Clarence J. Rogers (Dr.)—I was slightly "batty;" in fact, I was a raving maniac for a few moments. It seemed like a miracle to me that my letter, signed Number W. 93, should be *on the same page with his letter*. He has modestly stated his accomplishments, and I wish to state that he is a valuable asset to any one wishing a man of nerve and brains. He is nerve personified, and I know he used to argue medicine and put questions to his professors in the medical college that they could not explain. He is a genius, and the best and truest pal I ever had, and we've traveled almost 30,000 miles together and slept in anything from a chicken coop in New Orleans to a high-class hotel in London. I am writing him a letter to-night, full of heart-felt gratitude and love for a pal after these thirteen years. I have wondered where he was, and if he will join me we will come to ADVENTURE in person, as he will go anywhere any time with me.

You can publish my name this time, as I now believe and have implicit faith in ADVENTURE.—CHARLES A. POLLY, Hotel Mayer, 12th & Wabash, Chicago, Ill.

SOME of you already know that General Cliff Sands' mining and treasure-hunting expedition to South America was stopped by the authorities at San Francisco. The following telegram brought me the news:

Expedition considered by authorities to be of a filibustering nature or at least illegal in some way. Am ruined, as I have everything I have in it, but want to spare my men any loss. Please notify them through your publication to send their receipts, if they have made any deposits, to the University State Bank, Seattle, with orders to turn said over to me on my depositing amount to cover. Yours for a new beginning in life.

CLIFFORD SANDS.

I have had quite a few letters and newspaper clippings from the Pacific Coast. Nearly all the letters are in defense of Sands. Some charge that all the trouble came from a rival expedition. I have only indirect evidence to go on, but personally believe that Sands is victim, not sinner. In any case his telegram shows pluck and honesty, and I hear some of his men had so much faith in him that they did not want to take their money back.

WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or part of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. Items asking for money rather then men will not be published.

IN 1914 am going on grand photographic tour of all countries in the New World (25), and desire a congenial young Christian American of good appearance as a companion. He must be free from drink and gambling, and supply from $300 to $400. I will put up same amount, for current expenses while ashore.

I know South America very well, and speak its two languages. Tour will last about 8 or 9 months, and he must be willing to rough it part of the time. I offer absolutely no financial returns, but offer the joy of such a trip—a visit to exactly 24 foreign countries in 9 months, for $300 to $400. I arrange free steamship passages in every instance. The money will be used to defray living expenses while ashore and a few short train-fares. You will most certainly return home without your money, but your experiences will be worth double.

New York to this place, Buenos Aires, is the first trip, calling at Brazil and Uruguay on the way.

Am an American, 27, good appearance; have traveled all over the world in 12½ years several times; excellent companion, so I'm told.

Could take my companion to Havana with me the first of the year and give him an opportunity to earn a hundred or so before we start. Free trip to Havana.—Address VICTOR HOPE, care ADVENTURE.

THE young student Schwartz, who started in 1903 from Bucharest, South Europe, on a voyage round the world, has just finished the tour after 10 years of adventure. Now in Southern California. After a rest, am fitting out a 10,000-mile business expedition. Need a few sincere companions to invest in this trading expedition.—Address No. W 208.

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AM ORGANIZING a company to explore South America, where I have spent the past 6 years and found a very fertile field for those willing to stand a few hardships, and where by pulling together we can clean up a nice little lump for a rainy day.—Address GEO. BLANCHARD, Box 261, Wessington Springs, S. Dak.

EXPECT to start for South America about first of year and would like to carry an identification-card in case of accident. Want a man ready to try his luck down there, or who could give me reliable information of mining districts there. A miner myself and have traveled considerably. Want experienced man, but he must have at least $1000 to start with.—Address No. W 193.

AM GOING South in 40-ft. sloop-yacht from Connecticut. Is there any one to go with me who can guarantee a chance for us to bring home something worth while, as well as adventure?—Address No. W 206.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE. In this issue we print a few items from men wanting adventures, these being received before our first notice appeared. After this only items of adventures wanting men will be published. This is necessary to save space, and in no way lessens the practical value of this department.—A. S. H.

WANT companions for myself and two others to South America. No money required except for passage and kit. To leave about first of year.—Address ROYAL M. WILLIAMS, 221 West Jefferson Avenue, Dallas, Texas.

WANT four able-bodied men, age about 25, good shots and total abstainers. Technical education preferred. Each to furnish $50 cash. Expedition will start early in 1914 to explore interior of Brazil.—Address 1st lieutenant HARRY P. WHITE, Burlington, N. C.

WANT to join exploring expedition to Mexico or Central America. Age 20. Want expenses; salary a secondary consideration. Good shot with rifle or shotgun; fair with revolver; fair gasoline engineer. Long experience in Maine. Plenty of nerve, know how to take orders; when I start anything I usually finish it.—Address No. W 209.

OPEN for offers from any white man. Englishman, 29, 4 years British merchant service (sail), 2 years theatrical performer, 2 years wireless operator on liners, 3 years' successful record as aviator. Editor trade magazine, lecturer, salesman, music master. Now with large moving-picture studio. Traveled in every country but Mexico and India. Want to hit the pike again. Willing for any one to delve into my past. Am not "afraid of nothing," but I'll stick, right up to the last shell and then some.—Address No. W 192.

WANT to hook up with a good scout financially fixed and looking for exciting adventure. Age 25, blond, German-American, 5 ft. 11 in., 170 lbs. Have covered 8 States; strong and healthy. Can handle revolver and rifle, row, paddle, and motorcycle; handle and ride horses. Have been clerk, salesman, fireman, guard, railroad detective, investigator, spotter, private detective, etc. Fair education. A sticker. No money to invest. Will take a long chance if you will pay for it. Open for anything, in any country.—Address, HAROLD L. BREIDENBACH, 10630 Wade Park Av., Cleveland, O.

WANT adventure. Age 20, 5 ft. 10 in., 150 lbs. Good shot; have handled dynamite; know a good deal about wireless telegraphy and electricity in general; can run gas engine, motor boat and motorcycle; can ride, row, swim and walk; know something about aeronautics, mining and geology; interested in all things scientific and mystical; several small inventions; have hunted buried treasure, dug up Indian mounds, and own a pirate's chart of his trove; have lived both North and South. Neither a "sport" nor a "dead one."—Address No. W 196.

WANT post with any expedition or party desirous of medical assistance. A physician (M. B., Edinburgh, Scotland); age 36. Experience in India, New Zealand, Australia, Fiji; nodding acquaintance with South Africa, Egypt, Ceylon, Straits Settlements, Hawaii, etc. Speak fluent Hindustani, a little Madrassi and Tolenga (Malabar Coast). Fijian, Maori, and a smattering of other outlandish *bhats*. Would be pleased to hear from firms in search of a *pukka* representative in the East or Oceania. Salary of secondary importance. Wish to avoid threatened dreariness of a country practise.—Address No. W 200.

WANT adventure in any part of the world. Tropics preferred. English, age 29, 5 ft. 4 in. Professional photographer (graduate from first-class London house), flashlight my specialty. 2½ years in India and 2 in South Africa. (Natural-history photography.) Have run locomotives and all kinds of steam machinery; marine oiler and fireman; good knowledge of heliograph; good rifle shot; military training; hunted through the Rockies. Don't drink. No capital.—Address No. W 195.

WANT any legitimate adventure, South America preferred, with chance of a little money. Age 22; good shot; have hunted in the Ozarks and in Spavinaw Hills, Oklahoma; speak German and some Spanish. Reporter. Can raise limited cash.—Address No. W 37.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

FRANK EPLY RICHARDSON. Left Milwaukee in September, probably headed for a South American port. Well built, athlete, five feet eight inches, red hair, blue eyes, two gold teeth upper jaw. News wanted by chum.—Address LOUIS ZAPPERT, General Delivery, North East, Pennsylvania.

CAPTAIN BILLY O'NEILL. Formerly 7th U. S. Cavalry. Last heard of fighting under Carranza in Coahuila, Mexico. News wanted.—Address No. L. T. 207.

JOHN F. MORIARTY, WILBURN JAY. Formerly of the Madero Foreign Legion in Mexico.—Address No. L. T. 207.

ARCHIBALD MEYRICK. Last heard of as Lieutenant in Prince of Wales's Light Horse, Boer War.—Address EINION MEYRICK, General Delivery, Minneapolis.

ED McGONIGAL. Formerly marine on U. S. S. *Lancaster* at Montevideo, Uruguay, in '97.—Address G. C. MCNEIL, Box 451, Charleston, W. Va.

HEIRS OF GLEN BROOK. News wanted. Considerable property in South America, not yet claimed.—Address GEO. BLANCHARD, Box 261, Wessington Springs, S. Dak.

"DUTCHY" SWEIDERT. (Phonetic spelling.) When last seen, 7 years ago, was about 5 ft. 8 in., age 18, 140 lbs., brown hair, scar on left cheek, machete-cut in palm of left hand. Probably best known in Central America where he mixed up in the Panama-Colombia scrap, and in Guatemala and Nicaragua revolutions. Also fought for Castro in Venezuela, from where he escaped in a barrel. Later was sole survivor of expedition to rubber country up Amazon. Worked with I. C. C., Panama Gov't., United Fruit Co., placers in Darien, in Ecuador with the railroad, in Peru, at Ero for old McQuen; later was chased out of Argentine for conspiring with Porterro. Last the writer saw of him was when we were chased out of the San Blas country, Panama, by the Indians. Last heard of working for some mining company near Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Information wanted.—Address M. G. BOGAN, Gen. Del., New Orleans.

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WALTER P. WILLBERN. Shipmate on U. S. S. *Marion*, 1880-1. Last heard of on Maltby Ave., Norfolk.—Address JOHN BORGHOFF, 402 16th Street, Omaha, Neb.

GORDON HASKINSON (English), STANLEY DAY. Last heard of at Ft. Dodge, Ia., 1912.—Address JAMES R. FRASER, *Dramatic Mirror*, 145 West 45th Street, New York City.

STANLEY S. WEST. Late editor Santiago *Herald*, reporter London *Daily Mail*, Hearst papers. Friend of WEX JONES. Red-headed, 160 lbs., 5 ft. 9½ in., English accent. Please write NO. L. T. 210.

"FRANK" McDANIEL. Pugilist, drummer. Write. Important.—Address No. L. T. 210.

JESS PARKER. Last heard of with cow-outfit in N. E. Wyoming.—Address No. L. T. 165.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

TAYLOR McDANIELS. Blue eyes, heavy shoulders, 5 ft. 11 in., a swinging walk Druggist by trade. News wanted for his mother.—Address T. W. EVANS, Gen. Del., Spokane, Wash.

L. H. DWIGHT. Hospital corps, Penn. regiment, Philippines, 1900. Write GEO. M. MOORE, Gen. Del., Buffalo, N. Y.

THOMAS GEORGE DIXON MORRIS, my lost son, left England 1905; last heard of in Winnipeg, 1907. Age 25, well educated.—Address T. N. MORRIS, care of Canadian Bank of Commerce, San Francisco.

COMRADES in Co. E, 20th U. S. Infantry, '95-7; Troop E, 7th U. S. Cavalry, '97-8, hospital corps, 23rd U. S. Infantry, Manila, Hospital Corps, Jolo; Hospital Corps, 40th U. S. V. I., northern Mindanao. Please write to "Oklahoma Pete."—Address GEO. M. KNISLEY, Box 218, Mount Vernon, Washington.

JOE MOULDER. Traveled England, Wales, etc., with me four years ago. Blue eyes, light hair, scar on right cheek, 5 ft. 8 in.—Address No. L. T. 178.

HERMAN STEARNS. Draftsman for Cambridge Bridge Co., Boston, 20 or 25 years ago. An old Florida pal.—Address J. H. BYER, 216 29th Avenue South, Seattle, Washington.

ANY ONE 4th Texas Vol. Infantry in Spanish War. Especially if he has roster of 4th Texas.—Address HARVY MORRIS, Co. D, 22d U. S. Infantry, 6th Brigade, 2nd Division, U. S. A., Texas City, Galveston, U. S. A.

RICHARD L. SHEPHERD. Last heard of in Vancouver. His mother is anxious to hear from him.—Address MRS. SHEPHERD, 9 Irene Ave., Toronto, Canada.

CORP. GUITO K. SUITE. Formerly of San Antonio. My old pal.—Address J. R. MELLIFF, Pleasanton, Tex.

COMRADES with me at Ladysmith and along Tugela, under Gen. Rasmussen, under Feldtcornets Rourke and Van der Merve, Oct. 30, '99, Jan. 6, '00, and up to June 28, '00. Also comrade prisoners of war at Diyatalowa and Ragama, Ceylon, particularly John Murray, Tom Morrows, James McTigh, Jack Ryan.—Address JOHN BUSSANICH, 5834 18th Ave. South, Seattle.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

GEORGE B. CRAVEN. Last heard of with *Morning Star*, Wilmington, N. C.—Address Box 306, Fort Myers, Fla.

A. G. CHRISTENSEN. Came to South America from Africa in earlier part of 1904. Write his old friend, A. C. WALLIS, 22 Minot St., Neponset, Mass.

JIM CONELLY. Last in Congo district, Africa, doing patrol duty in '88-9. News wanted.—Address T. M. REAP, Hennessey, Okla.

ISAAC RAANSVAAL. Last heard of on way to Philippines, Co. I, 9th U. S. I.—Address DICK NAIL, 1804 Clarence St., Dallas, Tex.

AL. H. BROOKS. Formerly rancher near Calgary, Canada. Please write his old friend, A. H. Bull, Albuquerque, N. M.

BENJAMIN F. MEGIE. Left the U. S. some 5 or 6 years ago for South America and South Africa. Please write A. H. BULL, Albuquerque, N. M.

JAMES DALZIEL. With me from Seattle to Antwerp on the bark *Socotra* around Cape Horn in 1901. Please write CHIEF ENGINEER, Steamship *Florida*, Port Arthur, Texas.

WILLIAM CHALMERS SMITH. Last heard of in Chihuahua, Mexico, working as mine superintendent for New York Co. News wanted by his nephew.—Address BYRON L. ANGELL, R. F. D. 1., Box 85, Oleander, Fresno Co., Cal.

WILLIS CORY. Called Red, Kentuck, or Wins Golden. In Philippines 1903-4, and '05 in Tex. Last heard of 1906, California. Address wanted.—Address No. L. T. 79.

FRED KNUDSEN. Antwerp to 'Frisco on the *Red Rock;* to Tacoma on *Balmoral;* to Shanghai on *Willis A. Holden.* Imperial Maritime Customs of China. 'Frisco quake and Hongkong typhoon together.—Address ALFRED S. BIRKENHYME, Covington, La.

JASPER. Met him 1911, Key West. Last heard of *en route* Havana to Mexico, Dec., '11. News wanted. Also from

OLD SHIPMATES British bark *Lyderhorn*, 1902-4.—Address PERCY MORRISS, 1310 East 64th Street, Chicago.

JACK BONHAM. Born Hastings, Eng. Band of Royal Sussex 1900-6. To Sherbrooke, P. Q., Canada, March 1906. Last heard from Aug. 1906, Sherbrooke. Natural musician. Word wanted by mother. Address MRS. JEAN BONHAM, care ADVENTURE.

ROBERT F. CATON, JOHN SERRANO, ALBERT SARFATTY, FRANK CRIEGER. Please write A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

THE following have been inquired for in previous issues of "Lost Trails." They can get name of inquirer from this magazine or from previous issues of ADVENTURE for 1913.

WILLIAM O'MEARA, bark *Guiana*, '86; Miles G. Wiley; Conrad A. Engisser; William Le Vonde; Clarence Rae, P. J. R.; Jimmie Gibney, F. A. Sherwood; Edward P. Doyle, formerly 7th U. S. C.; Harry G. Robertson, customs, Manila; William McElvain; Capt. C. D. Morine; F. E. Smith, *Olympia* at Manila; Chas. Bush, once U. S. N.; John W. ("Red") Bardsley; Big Mentusha; "Lee" or P. M. Morris; James, Thomas and A. K. Barwick; Roland Henry Crane; Wm. G. Tice; Jack Costelloe, Australian; Patrick, Michael and James Cunningham; comrades of "Lintic" O'Sea on "El Rayo"; Ed (Wessel) Deckard; J. W. McKinzie, formerly U. S. N.; Frank Miller, John and Lee Crawford, Wm. Harson; Capt. Vaughn or any comrades of Percy Tressider; Capt. F. T. Parker; T. S. M. Cottrell, Corp. McEwen, Cooper, Sergt. Dacombe, once Troop B, M. M. P.; also Capt. Nesbitt, V. C., and other comrades of M. M. Marsden; Howard Irvin, on *Maitai*, '11; Gulliver, Iquique, '98; Gordon Law, Simon P. Culp; Charles Goobrick, once U. S. N. H. C.; comrades of Capt. F. E. Van Leue; A. S. O'Connor, Bob Ross, Jimmie Van Damme, Hans Kufeke, Jack Griffiths, Julian Harries, Jack Gardiner, once E and C Troops, B. S. A. P.; Edward J. Raeder; Martin Lane, U. S. A., Klondike; Charlie Schaeffer, Sonora; Dick Martel, Hermosillo; Charlie Sutherland, once Bechuanaland Police; Jack Prout, Porcupine; Fred Scott, once Pennsylvania newspaper man; George Dean, whaling bark *Canton;* Oscar Smith, Australian; Percy M. DuBois, R. R. Plum, Joe Enscoe, Chas. Carruthers, Lester Selig, Thos. L. Hogan, Andy Osbourne, once of the *Evening Star;* Pete Meissner, Grajervo.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

Julia A. Sill, New York; Horatio Langford King, Galveston, Texas; W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pachica, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manson, Chicago, Cal.

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Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
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